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THE

DRAMATIC AND POETICAL WORKS

OF

MARY RUSSELL MITFORD,

AUTHOR OF

"OUR VILLAGE." "ATHERTON," &c.

HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS, SUCCESSORS TO
HENRY COLBURN, 13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

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M. R. Mitford

A T H E R T O N,

AND

OTHER TALES.

BY

MARY RUSSELL MITFORD,

AUTHOR OF "OUR VILLAGE."

Second Edition.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,

SUCCESSORS TO HENRY COLBURN,

13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1854.

M. S. MYERS, PRINTER,
22, TAVISTOCK STREET, COVENT GARDEN.

ALBION LADY TO MYERS

PRINTED BY M. S. MYERS

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1854
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TO HER DEAR FRIEND,

LADY RUSSELL,

WHOSE SYMPATHY HAS CHEERED THE PAINFULLEST HOUR,
AS HER COMPANIONSHIP HAS GLADDENED THE BRIGHTEST,

THIS TALE,

WRITTEN BENEATH THE SHADOW OF HER OWN BEAUTIFUL
SWALLOWFIELD,

IS MOST RESPECTFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY

INSCRIBED BY

THE AUTHOR.



P R E F A C E.

THE mere plan of Atherton—the bare outline of the story—has lain for many years in my mind as a book to be written some day or other, and it would probably have passed away unexecuted, with other intentions good or bad, had not a proposal to gather together, at the same time, though in a separate form, my dramatic works, and some short prose tales, brought this old scheme to my recollection.

My offer to attempt this, the longest narrative on which I have ventured, was

received with such kind encouragement, that I was easily induced to undertake the task.

This occurred at the end of last summer.

Ten months before, I had had a very severe accident, having been thrown from my little pony carriage, on the hard gravel road of a friend's park. No bones were broken; but the jar had affected every nerve, and falling upon a highly rheumatic subject, had left the limbs and body crippled and powerless. There was, however, something to be expected from the great restorer, Time; and during the summer, I had been lifted down stairs, and driven through our beautiful lanes, in hopes that the blessed air, to which I had been almost as much accustomed as a gipsy, would prove a still more effectual remedy.

But the season was peculiarly unfa-

vourable. I gained no strength. The autumn found me again confined to my room; wheeled with difficulty from the bed to the fireside; unable to rise from my seat, to stand for a moment, to put one foot before another; and when lifted into bed, incapable of turning or moving in the slightest degree whatever. Even in writing, I was often obliged to have the ink-glass held for me, because I could not raise my hand to dip the pen in the ink.

In this state, with frequent paroxysms of pain, was the greater part of "Atherton" written. It was concluded during a severe attack of influenza,—concluded because it lay upon my mind as an engagement to be fulfilled—a debt to be discharged; and there was less risk in the exertion than in the anxiety.

I have told this story, not so much as an

excuse for faults or shortcomings, since I well know that the public looks, and has a right to look, to the quality of a work, and not to the circumstances under which it has been produced ; I tell it as a fact rather than an apology ; and most surely not as a complaint. So far, indeed, am I from murmuring against that Will which alone knows what is best for us all, that I cannot be sufficiently thankful to the merciful Providence which, shattering the frame, left such poor faculties as were originally vouchsafed to me, undimmed and unclouded ; enabling me still to live by the mind, and not only to enjoy the never-wearying delight of reading the thoughts of others, but even to light up a sick chamber, and brighten a wintry sky, by recalling the sweet and sunny valley, which formed one of the most cherished haunts of my happier years.

The shorter Stories might, I think, fairly pass for manuscript. They were written, for the most part, for one of those costly and splendid Annuals, which many bought to look at, and few cared to read. That they were composed to match the pictures is hardly a disadvantage, since pictures are often full of suggestions; but that they were called for in furious haste, and were sometimes illustrations of distant ages and distant countries, was hardly favourable to a writer so slow and so home-loving as myself. I would fain have added one or two of such sketches as used to be received only too indulgently, but strength and power have failed me so entirely, that I have been unable even to correct the proofs of the later volumes.

And now, gentle reader, health and farewell.

M. R. MITFORD.

Swallowfield, March, 1854.

ATHERTON.

CHAPTER I.

THE GREAT FARM.

It was about three o'clock on a November afternoon, somewhere about five and thirty years ago, that an old fashioned post-chaise, with one solitary inmate, went rumbling and jumbling over the wide verdant ocean of one of the great downs of the southern counties. The traveller, a lean, gaunt, bony man, a good deal on the shady side of fifty, bore about him in his acute features, his shrewd eye, a certain

formality of demeanour and an occasional quaintness of phrase, evident marks of his profession ; and did not need the blue bag which, flanked by an ancient folio, rested on the seat beside him, to be at once recognized for what he really was, a London solicitor. There was, however, in the deep and somewhat sad abstraction in which he leant back in the carriage, evidence of more personal feelings than those arising from professional interest ; and he started, as from a painful dream, when, on arriving at the top of a hill, or rather on attaining the extremity of a high table-land, the postboy suddenly stopped his horses, and touching his cap, turned round with the inquiry :

“ To the Hall, sir ? ”

“ No ; to the Great Farm.”

And, aroused from the dismal thoughts by which he had been engrossed, Mr. Langhton addressed himself to the contem-

plation of the beautiful landscape before him.

A most beautiful landscape it was. The season had been mild, so that the trees retained much of their foliage, and had rather gained than lost in richness of colour; the dark and uniform verdure of summer being well exchanged for the warm hues of autumn, varying from golden brown to palish yellow, with many a ruddy gleam from the old thorns, and many an orange light from the beech-woods, forming so fine a contrast with the emerald depths of the grassy valley, and the purplish tint of the hills. A thrice beautiful landscape. One of those oases of cultivation which are occasionally found amid the great downs of the south of England, and appear all the richer and more fertile when embedded in the surrounding barrenness and sterility.

The road wound down a long declivity

to a village embosomed in wood, with its grey church-tower, its pretty rectory, its neat cottages and cottage-shops to the old gables, the barns, stables, ricks, and innumerable outbuildings of the Great Farm. Climbing up the opposite hill appeared the magnificent demesne of Atherton Hall; the park paling overhung with gigantic trees, bounding the road for upwards of a mile, its stately lodges, its waters, lawns, and woods, extending to a chase whose wild forest scenery was lost in the distance. Midway the acclivity, the princely mansion, a fine specimen of the Palladian architecture which prevailed in England in the eighteenth century, with its noble portico and long colonnades, its broad terraces, and flight above flight of marble steps, stood glittering in the wintry light, as if, like the peacocks sunning themselves on the balustrade, the very walls had a consciousness of their own proud beauty.

Mr. Langhton had the familiarity of a native with the scenery, and, himself a man of refined taste, never looked at it without pleasure. Now, however, as he gazed at the palace of the proud noble and the homestead of the tenant, his musings seemed to become sadder :

“A strange destiny,” thought he, “to carry wealth to one household and poverty to another; misery, perhaps to both! Well, it is a lawyer’s fate !”

And so thinking he drove up to the door.

There were few houses which wore more completely the outward show of comfort and prosperity than the Great Farm at Atherton. It was a large square substantial building, with fine fruit-trees covering the upper part of the walls, and jessamine, honeysuckle, and China roses clustering round the windows. The green court, which divided the house from the road, was gay during nine months of the year

with flowers and flowering trees; and boasted still some lingering spikes of hollyhock, a stray blossom of clove and scarlet geranium, and bunches of that most fragrant of roses which is called "of the four seasons." The mignonette too and the violet still mingled their delicious odours. People who sincerely love flowers contrive to make them blow sooner and later than others. We see this in the poorest cottages, and here was no poverty to contend with. On one side of the court was that most affluent of all territories, an immense orchard, a perfect grove of fruit-trees, cherry, apple, pear, plum, and walnut at their tallest growth and fullest bearing. Behind was a large kitchen-garden; and on the side opposite to the orchard a magnificent farm-yard, a huge and indescribable mixture of riches and mud. Behind that came poultry-yard and rick-yard, horse-pond and duck-

pond, barns, stables, cart-houses, cow-houses, dovecots, and pigsties, with all their inhabitants biped and quadruped, feathered and unfeathered of every denomination.

They who talk of the quiet of the country can hardly have been in a great farm-yard, towards sunset on a wintry day, when the teams are come back from the plough and the cattle from the field, and the whole population is gathered together for the purpose of feeding. I would match it for noise and dirt and jostling against Cheapside, and taking into account the variety of the creatures, and the different keys combined in that wild chorus, I should have little doubt of winning.

Lord Delancy, the noble owner of the Hall, had most extensive estates in the same county ; but nearly all the parish of Atherton was rented by the tenant of

the Great Farm, and that tenant was a woman.

Mrs. Warner had presided over this land of plenty for nearly fifty years, originally as the wife of the master, latterly as the mistress, and always with high reputation for hospitality and good management. She was a neat, gentle, lady-like person, with silver hair, a fair, pale complexion, mild dark eyes, a little tremor of head and voice, and a slight bend of the slender figure ; altogether a most venerable and beautiful old woman. Her family consisted of a daughter-in-law, the widow of her only son, and of their daughter Catherine, commonly called Katy Warner, a girl of fifteen.

Katy's mother was a round, rosy, merry, bustling dame, who having, since the death of her first husband, had, as she expressed it, the luck to marry and bury a second, bore the name of Bell. To her

for some years back the chief government of the house and farm had devolved, and few women could be fitter for such a charge. With a frame strong and active as that of a man, a competent knowledge of husbandry, a good judgment in cattle, and considerable skill in parish affairs; with a kindness that was always felt and a tongue that was often heard, she scolded her way through the agricultural year from wheat-sowing to harvest. Ignorant as a new-born child of the world and its ways, except always the small bit of that "huge rotundity" called the manor and royalty of Atherton, it is probable that the very limitation of her faculties conduced not a little to her prosperity. Fearful of experiments, she stuck to the old routine adapted to her capacity; and trusted to the experience of her labourers, men for the most part born upon the land, who knew every inch of

the ground, and cared for the interest of their good mistress as if it had been their own. Everything throve in this female household, from the flocks whose numbers were counted by thousands down to Katy's bees.

The parlour, the common living-room of the family, was smaller than, to judge from its appearance, any room in that house ought to have been, chosen, perhaps, on that account—people who can command large rooms having a frequent tendency to use small ones.

It was a sort of excrescence on one side of the dwelling, a kind of afterthought, with a sunny bay-window commanding the farm-yard, from which it was only parted by a low paling and a slip of turf, and giving a peep at the high-road.

A snug and cheerful apartment, after all, was that little parlour, crowded with furniture, from the good old lady's high-

backed chair to the low stool on which Katy, whenever that mercurial little person did stay five minutes in a place, used to sit at her grandmother's feet.

In the centre was a small Pembroke table of dark mahogany, somewhat rickety; at the end a sideboard of the same material, the drawers groaning with stands of spirits, and bottles of home-made wine, the top covered with miscellaneous articles, Mrs. Warner's large Bible, surmounted by a cookery-book, occupying one corner, whilst Mrs. Bell's enormous work-baskets and work-bags over-filled the other; a beautiful jar of dried grasses, Katy's property, occupied the middle. Katy's possessions, indeed, might be traced everywhere. Her litter, living and dead, cumbered the walls and the floor. Birds, kittens, skipping-ropes, bridles, riding-whips, and battle-dores were distributed all over the room, whilst

a fat spaniel called Flora lay basking before the fire.

Two triangular cupboards occupied two opposite corners; of which one was so crammed with closely-packed glass and china that it was dangerous for any unaccustomed finger to attempt to extricate cup or saucer from the pile; whilst the other was filled to bursting with articles of daily call, tea, sugar, lemons, nutmegs, and gingerbread. Fruit at all seasons, and cakes of many denominations completed the array. No one could enter that room without tasting the light seed-cake—diet-bread Mrs. Warner called it—compounded from a family recipe a hundred years old; or the green gooseberry wine, famous as that of Mrs. Primrose, sparkling and effervescent as champagne. It was the very temple of hospitality.

A side-door opened into a hall which

might, perhaps, lay equal claim to that title; a large flagged apartment, with a wide open hearth and a heavy oak table, on which business of eating and drinking was going forward all day long. The materials, it is true, were somewhat different; consisting not of such kickshaws as cake and wine, but of solid beef in its most ponderous form of round and ⁱst~~ur~~loin, massive bacon, and mighty ale. All the comers and goers of the Farm paid a visit to the Stone Hall; and it may be suspected that they occasionally made an errand for no better purpose.

At this very moment it was the scene of a barter betwixt Joseph Stokes, the old bailiff and factotum, and a west country dealer, bent to exchange a certain drove of horned cattle against a flock of Mrs. Warner's Southdowns. It was probable that the day would go against the good bailiff.

The man of beeves, a seasoned vessel, having declined the home-brewed, and preferred to drive his bargain over a pitcher of gin-toddy, which was already making innovation upon Joseph's brain unused to such potations.

His mistresses the whilst were assembled in the common room ; Katy, absorbed by the witcheries of the " Arabian Nights," a recent acquisition ; Mrs. Warner nodding over her knitting, and striving, not very successfully, to resist the after-dinner nap of calm and gentle age ; Mrs. Bell engaged, with her female prime minister Rachel, in looking over a stupendous basket of clothes, the produce of the great wash,—such a flasket as might comfortably have carried the fat knight, Sir John, to his immortal ducking in Datchet Mead. Nothing but long habit could have protected Mrs. Warner's slumbers against

the emphatic exclamations of the mistress at stockings mismatched, snagged tablecloths, and missing kerchiefs, or the shrill defences of the maid.

Through the Stone Hall, scarcely noticed by its trafficking tenants, higglers upon a large scale, and into the smaller apartment, hardly less noisy with its vociferous housewifery, good Mr. Langhton made his way, welcomed as an honoured friend by all its inmates. Even Flora rose lazily from the hearth-rug to greet the guest who carried so kind a heart under so formal a bearing. Dogs are great penetrators into the hidden mystery of character. When they wag their tails, you may be sure either that there is no deception, or that the deception is of the rarest and honestest sort, that the wood beneath is of finer grain than the outward veneering. Flora set up her long ears, and wagged her tail in his honour; Mrs. Warner pressed his offered hand;

Katy skipped about him for joy ; Mrs. Bell, jingling her keys, assailed him with a perfect storm of hospitality ; and Rachel stood eagerly waiting to execute her orders.

He put aside her offers with characteristic decision. “ He would have nothing yet, he thanked her. He had taken something at the last stage. No dinner ; no wine ; no cakes ; no fruit. He must sleep at the Hall, where Lord Delancy had appointed to meet him. He would take a cup of tea by-and-bye, when they did, at their usual time. In the meanwhile, he wished to speak a few words to Mrs. Warner.”

So the produce of the great wash was again packed into its huge receptacle, which Mrs. Bell and Rachel shoved with some difficulty through the door ; Katy picking up odds and ends of clean linen as they fell from the pile, rolling them into

tight pellets, and tossing them laughingly into the basket as the party disappeared, pretty much as a schoolboy might have flung a ball at cricket.

CHAPTER II.

THE MISER'S WILL.

“KATY grows a charming girl,” cried the old lawyer, when left alone with his hostess, settling himself comfortably on the opposite side of the bright wood fire. “She is already taller than her mother, and prettier than anything that I have seen this many a day. That rosy, dimpled, sparkling beauty is become very uncommon in London. I suppose she owes her fulness of bloom to your country air and country freedom. There is as perfect evidence of health in those bright hazel eyes, with their long lashes, and that profusion of shining

brown curls, as in the glowing cheeks and ruddy lips, and the white teeth which she shows as often as she smiles, that is, as often as she speaks."

"She is sunburnt just now," said grand-mamma, highly pleased, and wishing to hear more praises of her darling.

"Not a bit more sunburnt than she ought to be, as the party lady said of Wilkes's squint," responded the old lawyer; "her beauty is only the richer for it. How old is she?"

"Fifteen last April; a mere child yet, and I am afraid a spoilt child—wild as a colt untamed, but good and kind and innocent and loving, with all her pranks. Was it of Katy that you wished to speak to me, Mr. Langhton?" asked the old lady, recollecting herself.

"Not exactly, although the subject on which I have to speak with you may greatly influence her future life. Did you ever

hear of a relation of your late husband, called Richard Strange? Do you recollect him?"

"Recollect him? truly do I! Neither my husband nor I were so rich in kinsfolk that we could afford to forget one; and this Richard Strange was, I think, the nearest relation my poor Thomas had. He was his cousin once removed, having been the cousin-german of his father. Ay, he was above a dozen years older than Thomas, and must be old now—half-way, I should think, between fourscore and ninety. I should suppose he must be failing too; although, when I last saw him, he was active and hearty—one of those thin and wiry men who keep their strength long."

"You knew him, then?"

"Yes, I have seen him perhaps half a score times since my marriage; the last time was about fourteen years ago, before my poor son's death. I remember he was

much taken with Katy, then a little toddling thing, just beginning to talk, who laughed and played with him as she did with everybody. I have never seen him since, but we commonly hear from him at Christmas. To say the truth, Mr. Langhton, my husband, who was as kind a soul as ever lived, used to keep up the old fashion of sending a basket of country cheer, turkey, and chine, and such like, to two or three far-away kinsfolk in London; and I have continued the custom, the rather that we know most of them to be not the best off in the world. Somebody, indeed, told my daughter that Richard Strange, though he did look like an old beggar, was quite well to do. But she called upon him in London when she went there last year about the late Mr. Bell's affairs, and found him living in a poor way enough. A very poor way by her account, though she never saw him in

his own place, only in a sort of porter's lodge. Does he want any thing that we can do for him, I wonder? Do you know him, Mr. Langhton?"

"I did know him as intimately, perhaps, as he chose to be known by anybody. He is dead. I was his solicitor; I am now his executor; and it is about his will, Mrs. Warner, that I am come to you. I am not afraid of overturning a mind so well-balanced as yours. Did it never occur to you that there are in the world such things as misers? That cousin of your good husband, Richard Strange, has died worth almost two millions of money; and of that sum, nearly half—quite half, except moderate legacies to a few charities, and the still fewer private friends, that a man who passes his life in money-getting can hope to acquire—the half of this sum is bequeathed to the heirs of the body of his deceased kinsman, Thomas Warner of Atherton Great Farm."

“To Katy! the only daughter of his only son!—to my poor Katy!” And in spite of the well-balanced mind which had been justly imputed to her, the good grandmother, struck, perhaps, by a transition in the fate of her simple pet, which sounded like the conclusion of a fairy-tale, seemed likely to faint.

“Ay, dear Mrs. Warner, you may well look astounded. Take a glass of your own wine,” said Mr. Langhton, administering the cordial. “You may well be frightened: it is a terrible destiny to be a great heiress. But there is health of mind as well as of body in that bright-eyed damsel. She will have you to take care of her, and, in a far less important degree, she will also have me. And she shall also, if I see cause for such a measure, have the Court of Chancery,” added the good lawyer with a peculiar smile, “which, with all its faults, and they are

many, does yet extend a very vigilant protection over its wards, a most comfortable protection to those who have heiresses in charge, keeping off fortune-hunters, and rendering elopements and abductions unprofitable and unsafe. Ay, we must keep off fortune-hunters," continued he, slowly rubbing his hands with an air of deliberation, as if weighing some important project, "we must keep off fortune-hunters. But as Katy will have only too much money of her own, instead of looking out ourselves for mere wealth, we must select for her some young man for whom we can answer; whose estate and position will satisfy the world, and whose character will be a pledge for her happiness. A fortune of nearly a million is certainly, according to my views, a great danger, and therefore a great calamity; but there are consolations even for that. We must look about us."

“Or Katy hereafter may look about for herself,” interposed Mrs. Warner. “Old as I am, I have still some faith in a marriage of affection. With that fortune, and the prettiness you were talking of, our little girl may make her own choice.”

“Hem !” quoth the man of law again, rubbing his hands. “We may help her, though. Those love-matches of boys and girls are not always the happiest. However, we’ll talk of that another time. These are early days as yet ; for, as you may well imagine, I took care to inform you as soon as I had ascertained that there was no chance, I may say no possibility of another claimant.”

“Poor Richard Strange ! When did he die ?”

“That there is no telling. He lived, if such an existence can be called living, in miserable dilapidated chambers, in an out-of-the-way place called Lyon’s Inn. I

myself had never been inside his rooms until I went thither upon this business. Frequently as he had occasion to consult me, he either came to me at my own office, or appointed to meet me at some third place ; always contriving to make the persons with whom he had dealings, whether they bought estates, or whether they sold estates ; or whether, as happened most frequently, they mortgaged the dirty acres, defray every charge possible. My bills, always paid by the other party, were nothing compared with his : meetings, journeys, consultations, letters written, letters received, postage, carriage, loss of time, and when every imaginable item had been put down, he would add some unimaginable sum under the head of sundries. A thorough miser was Richard Strange ; Elwes might have taken pattern from him."

" And was that how he scraped together so much money ?"

“No doubt he began by scraping together—by mere saving. That was before my time. But in addition to his habit of hoarding, which was a veritable instinct like that of a squirrel or a monkey, he had immense sagacity in the management of money—understood the handling of that delicate machine, called the stocks, better than any man on 'Change, never missed a good stroke, never made a bad one, trafficked in everything, gained by everything, lost nothing, spent nothing; so that on the whole, I am rather surprised that he did not cut up richer.”

“Mr. Langhton ! richer !”

“Aye ! such will be the general feeling of the monied world. Everybody will wonder what he could have done with his wealth ; though, to be sure, we may find a good deal more yet ; for he has left us no list of his property, and we have had little time to rummage. There may be another

million so far as I know. We shall find out by degrees. I must inquire amongst our great capitalists. They may help us."

"He knew them then?"

"Knew them! to see the respect paid to that shabby, dirty old figure when he entered any of the marts where men of money congregate! We are all gold-worshippers in our great Babylon. But in this case they bent before the skill as well as the metal; the amasser as well as the possessor of riches."

"Poor Richard Strange!" sighed Mrs. Warner. "And with all this gold, and this homage because of his gold, he died, if I understand you right, alone?"

"Alone as he had lived. The portress of the inn rendered him the little service that he would permit in his chambers; always under his own eye, for he visited nobody, and received his letters and parcels at the lodge. An honest, simple

creature she was, who, in spite of his avarice and his suspicions, had a certain pity for his age, his loneliness, and his infirmities. The four-score years and five were beginning to tell upon him fast. She always called him the poor gentleman. I am happy to say that he has left her what will make her comfortable, which, of course, we should have taken care to do on Katy's account, if he had not. I mention it only because it is pleasant that he should have done the right thing. There are good points in most of us, and they were not wanting in Richard Strange—though the crust at the surface was hard and deep.”

“But his death, Mr. Langhton? Tell me of that?”

“Well, on Monday evening last, as I was sitting dismally enough, alone in Norfolk Street, turning over huge masses of law papers relating to another acquaint-

tance of yours, to whom poverty will be a sorer trial than riches to Katy; this good creature, Mrs. Barnes, made her appearance to announce to me that Mr. Strange was missing. She came to me, she said, because he had once ordered her never to speak about him to any one else; the nearest approach to confidence that he had ever evinced towards any human being. He had not been seen or heard of since the preceding Tuesday. Letters and parcels had arrived; clerks had called on foot, and gentlefolk in coaches; they had rung the old bell till the wire broke; they had knocked till they were weary; there was no answer to knock or ring; no paper on the door, no sound of life in the chambers. Once before he had been missing for days, and had come out as if nothing had happened, only pale and thin. Another time, he had been gone a week, when the paper on the door said,

‘out till six.’ But then he had gone through the lodge; and now she was certain that he had not passed. What should she do?”

“And you broke open the door? It must have been an awful moment!”

And Mrs. Warner laid down her knitting, and held her spectacles in her trembling hand.

“It was an awful moment. I took with me my partner, James Osborne, and two or three other persons well known to poor Strange; called in the parish authorities; and, after a due course of knocking and shouting, proceeded to break open the door. We were obliged to summon locksmiths and blocksmiths. The gates of Newgate were never more strongly barricaded. It was an awful moment, and a most fearful sight. The squalidness, the sordidness, the dirt, the utter destitution of the miser’s home. No sign of coals

in the rusty grate ; not a vestige of food ; not so much as a cup of water ; and the poor owner of these riches and this misery, one of the greatest capitalists of Europe, lying in the midst of the papers and parchments which represented his enormous wealth, shrivelled up in a corner, covered with a rug which a beggar would have scorned, dead, as it seemed to me, rather of cold and starvation, than of sickness or of age. It was a terrible lesson."

"May Heaven pardon him !" And good Protestant as she was, it may be suspected that Mrs. Warner's inmost thought was not very unlike a prayer for the soul of Richard Strange. Mr. Langhton's next words brought her back to earth again.

"Almost the first packet that we discovered was addressed to me, and contained the Will. I had given him several

instructions for such a document many years ago, and was not at all surprised to find that Katy came in for nearly half the property."

"You expected this bequest, Mr. Langhton?"

"And you wonder that I did not communicate my expectations to you! I thought such a bequest probable. But who could answer for the caprice of a man so reserved and so little accessible to ordinary motives? He might have endowed a college or a cat. Would it have been wise to have entrusted dear Mrs. Bell with a contingency which her sanguine temper would have converted into a certainty, and have proclaimed to every soul in the parish, from Lord Delaney to Jacob Stokes?"

In spite of the tears which had moistened Mrs. Warner's spectacles, she now lifted her eyes with a smile in them, which

proved how thoroughly she joined in the good solicitor's estimate of her daughter-in-law's discretion. Then, with sudden recollection, she inquired :

“ And the other half of the property ? ”

“ Ay, there is the real mystery of this Will. That Richard Strange should bequeath great part of his money to the heir of his nearest kinsman, with whom he had constantly kept up a sort of intercourse, that for him might be called amicable, is natural and proper enough. But the other half—Did you ever hear your husband talk of a person called Betsy Brown, in conjunction with his kinsman ? ”

“ Never,” said Mrs. Warner.

“ I feared so. There must have been such a person ; and the poor heart, that now lies still and cold in the vaults of St. Clement's Church, must once have throbbed with a quickened pulse at the sound of that name. It is a sore puzzle.

Charged, as I said before, with certain legacies to charities, and to a very few individuals, the whole property is left to me in trust, for the heirs of the late Thomas Warner, of Atherton Great Farm, and Betsy Brown, formerly of Weston, her heirs and assigns. Such names, too!—Betsy Brown! There are a thousand Elizabeth Browns. Weston!—There are a hundred Westons. None of the few people who knew my poor client personally, as a man—not as a trafficker in Loans and Consols—none of these, and they are few, can give me the slightest indication as to the person designated. I must advertise: indeed, I have already given orders to that effect, and set the parish clerks to work, ransacking their registers. If there had but been spinster tacked to the end, so that one might have made sure of its being a maiden name! But there is not the slightest clue to the labyrinth. Luckily,”

added the perplexed lawyer, "the uncertainty respecting the other legatee will not interfere with the payment of Katy's moiety. And here she comes.

CHAPTER III.

THE HEIRESS.

“My queen, how would you like to be a great lady?” inquired Mr. Langhton of the unconscious heiress, using the pet name by which he was accustomed to address her.

“Very much,” replied Katy; “very much, indeed.”

“You are reading the ‘Arabian Nights’ Entertainments,” continued Mr. Langhton, glancing at the book, which amongst its other wonders had kept the little damsel quiet during the whole afternoon, and

which, too fascinating to be relinquished, she had carried off with her and still held in her hand. "You are reading the 'Arabian Nights.' What would you say to a Good Genius who brought you the Lamp of Aladdin, even though he should put on the form of a gaunt old lawyer?"

"Ah! but there are no such Good Geniuses now!" exclaimed Katy.

"Does she dare to tell me that? Ask your grandmamma."

Mrs. Warner's smile a little puzzled Katy.

"At all events," rejoined she, "there are no such lamps now-a-days as the Lamp of Aladdin. No Wonderful Lamps that can summon slaves and build palaces."

"Do not make too sure of that either," returned her friend. "For my part, I have always observed that money, provided there be but enough of it, can command as many slaves, and build as many palaces, as any old lamp of them all."

And then yielding to the natural curiosity of Katy, and the eager questioning of her mother, Mr. Langhton, for the second time, poured forth his marvellous tale.

Mrs. Bell, intent on hospitable cares, and thoroughly persuaded that her guest had had no dinner, had entered the room at the very moment of this little dialogue, heading a procession of serving-maidens bearing every sort of refreshment, sweet and savoury, that could be forced into the service of the tea-table, and was just arranging her stores of home-made dainties—hot-buttered cake, ham, sausages, kidneys, pork-pies, eggs, and honey-comb—when Mr. Langhton's story “sent,” to use her own expression, “all their wits a wool-gathering.” The result was a scene of disorder rarely witnessed in that orderly house.

The tea-caddy fell from its mistress's grasp upon the floor; the tea-kettle, in Rachel's trembling hands (for Rachel had

helped to spoil Katy from the time she was a month old) first sopped the buttered cake and then half-deluged the tea-tray; whilst the coffee-pot, wielded by the rosy-checked Sally, had well-nigh spilt its boiling contents on that pet of pets, the fat spaniel, Flora, who, too lazy to get out of the way, and accustomed to the observance of all around her, looked up astonished at the general confusion.

Mrs. Warner, however, by this time recovered from her emotion, vindicated Mr. Langton's opinion of her calmness, by assuming the direction of the tea-table. Another hot cake made its appearance, and the conversation resumed its desultory course. A dozen such surprises would not have silenced Mrs. Bell.

"I am sure," said she, "that this great fortune all comes from my having carried Katy, when we were in London last year, to see Mr. Strange at that place which he

called an Inn, but which, so far as I could make out, is not an Inn at all. That visit was the cause of this good luck."

"The Will is dated twenty years ago," observed Mr. Langhton.

"Never mind that," persisted she; "what does the date signify? I am quite sure that our visit did it all. But at first, to be sure, he seemed rather put out by being called down to that little place of a Lodge; and seemed to doubt if we were really his cousins from Atherton, till I showed him a great basket with a Michaelmas goose and a turkey and chine, and some lean-meats."

"Ah!" quoth Mr. Langhton, "so he recognised them?"

"Yes; and desired that when we sent up a hamper at Christmas, we should put in some turnips and carrots to eat with the chine, and plenty of sweet herbs to stuff the turkey; and, above all, he charged us not to forget to pay the portorage as well as the carriage.

“He was willing to remove any doubts that you might entertain respecting his identity. Did he say nothing to my little queen here?”

“He seemed mightily taken with her,” replied the good mother; “chucked her under the chin, and desired her to give him a kiss.”

“That was less peculiar,” observed the old lawyer. “Many a man might have made that request, and have invented the relationship on purpose.”

“I did not kiss him, though,” interrupted Katy, raising her head from her grandmother’s lap, as she sate leaning against her knee.

“He was mightily taken with her, nevertheless,” resumed Mrs. Bell; “and fumbled for a long time in those ragged pockets of his to find a halfpenny to give her. I have kept it myself,” continued she, fumbling in her turn in a huge pocket

which sent forth a jingling sound of many keys, mixed with thimbles, scissors, nutmeg-graters, knives, slate-pencils, a small padlock, a string of buttons, and money of all denominations. The treasure in question, the miser's gift, was carefully hoarded in an old-fashioned housewife. "I have kept it," said she, "partly as a curiosity, partly for luck—you see there's a hole in it. Katy's so careless, that I was afraid to trust it with her, for fear of her losing it, or giving it to the first beggar she met. And you see how right I was, and what luck it has brought her after all."

"The poor old halfpenny!" cried Katy, again looking up. "You will give it to me now, dear mamma: will you not? No fear that I should lose it now; I shall keep it as long as I live in memory of one who meant me so kindly. And yet it will be very bad luck if this legacy takes me from you, grandmamma, and from dear Atherton."

“But the legacy will neither take you from Atherton, or from grandmamma. I am your guardian, and your dear grandmamma will be joined with me in the trust; and she and your good mother will receive a large allowance for taking care of you.”

“Ah! how good they have always been! what care they have taken of me when I was nothing but a trouble to them!” exclaimed the heiress.

“And now I must be going. What shall I send you from London? Think what you want.”

“Oh! I have never wanted anything in all my life.”

“Then you have been happier than most people,” said the lawyer. “But think again. If you want nothing for yourself, do not you want something for others? Your good mamma, does she want nothing?” added he, in a low voice.

The colour rose in Katy's cheek.

"Let me whisper in your ear, Mr. Langhton; it's a secret. Could you, do you think, get in London four great, strong, beautiful cart-horses — perfect beauties?"

"Yes."

"Handsomer than Mr. Thorp's, the miller? Mamma has always had such a hankering after a bell-team like Mr. Thorp's. But I should like it to be finer than his. So would she. She would like that better than anything in the world, if you could manage it."

"I think it may be contrived. We shall see. Anything else?"

"And a new jacket and trowsers—a whole suit—for little Jacob Stokes. He takes care of my pony; and helps in my garden; and, poor boy, he is as ragged as a colt. And a new stuff-gown for poor Dame Barnes; and another—"

“Stop my queen, stop. You shall have money for jackets and gowns. But grandmamma—do you want nothing for the dear grandmamma?”

“Could you get a book called ‘Sir Charles Grandison,’ do you think? Grandmamma was saying the other day she should like to read it over again. I wonder if it’s as charming as the ‘Arabian Nights!’ And money to give away in cloaks and blankets. Let that be sent to grandmamma. Ah! I wish that all the fortune had been left to her! She would have spent it so much better than I shall ever do.”

“You will spend it none the worse, my dear, for mistrusting yourself. Bless God that you have such an example and such an adviser in all serious matters. And for the things which young ladies are expected to know in this wicked world, the common ways of what is called society, we

must look about for a guide. Do you see much of the good folk at the Rectory, Mrs. Warner? Mrs. Glenham is an elegant woman. I should think that her daughters would be nice companions for Katy?"

"The girls are still very young," replied Mrs. Warner: "children of ten and eleven. And we see less of Mrs. Glenham than formerly."

"Mrs. Glenham calls Katy a romp," added Mrs. Bell, in an affronted tone.

"She has never forgotten an unlucky nutting party in Atherton Wood, where frocks were torn, and bonnets crushed, and slippers lost," said the grandmother, smiling.

"I am sure it was all the fault of her own two sons," resumed Mrs. Bell. "There is not so rude a boy as Charles Glenham in all Atherton."

"Harry is not rude," interposed Katy. "He's the kindest creature in the world."

“It’s more than can be said of his prim sisters, or his fine lady mother,” rejoined Mrs. Bell. “She told me to my face that my daughter set hers a bad example. A bad example! Let her look at home. If Katy does get into a scrape now and then, whose fault is it, I wonder? When she happened to be riding Jacob Stokes’s donkey, and the animal put his fore feet into a ditch, and sent her over his head—was not it because Charles Glenham started out of the opposite hedge, blowing a cow-horn?”

“But Harry picked me up,” quoth Katy.

“And when Lord Delancy caught her in our orchard, perched in the middle of a cherry-tree—was not it because Master Charley had carried off the ladder?”

“Harry helped me down, mamma. Remember that.”

“Well! Of course a great lad just going

to College is not quite so bad as his younger brother. But for my part, I'll have nothing to say to the Glenhams. Mrs. Glenham to lecture me, and call Katy incorrigible !”

“ You are quite right, Mrs. Bell. We'll have nothing to say to them. And now I must be off to the Hall. Farewell, dear lady. Good-bye, my queen.”

CHAPTER IV.

THE LAWYER.

STEPHEN LANGHTON was, as the reader will have gathered from the preceding pages, a great London solicitor.

Forty years before he had left this very village of Atherton, of which his father was rector, to join his uncle, the head of an eminent firm in Norfolk Street, Strand. There, as clerk, as partner, and as successor, he had remained ever since ; an old bachelor like his predecessor, and like him uniting considerable taste and talent to unblemished integrity and much knowledge of his profession. From him, too, he inherited a trick of making friends of his clients, and taking a fidgety interest in

their prosperity and well-being. A peculiarity which contributed far more to the comfort and advantage of his employers than to his own; since, although in his own person free from all encumbrance (to borrow a favourite advertising phrase), he shared all the anxieties produced by unthrif^t heirs, unmanageable schoolboys, marriageable daughters, and gullible widows; and was indeed the general adviser, trustee, and executor of all his clients, dead or living.

For those belonging to his native village, he entertained particular affection; especially for Lord Delaney, whose property had been managed by the firm which he represented for upwards of a century; and with whom, although ranking amongst the haughtiest members of the aristocracy, he had lived, from the days when they were playfellows and schoolmates to the present hour, on terms

of fraternal affection and familiarity. And now this interest was deepened and saddened by the storm of adversity, which, after having been gathering for years around his noble friend, seemed likely to crush him to the very earth.

A long-pending suit respecting a disputed will had just been given against him. To feed this suit, mortgage upon mortgage had been granted upon his paternal estates, until those estates would hardly defray the securities with their accumulated interest.

In truth the property itself, extensive and splendid as it appeared, had been involved for many generations. The portions of younger sons, the dowries of daughters, the jointures of widows had prest upon it heavily; and, as so often happens with large nominal estates, each noble proprietor had lived up to his estimated rather than his real income.

There had been no vice amongst them; no gambling by cards or dice, no racing, no profligacy. Taste had been their worst enemy. One ancestor had restored the old baronial castle from which their title was derived in a northern county; another had built the splendid mansion of Atherton Hall. The late Lord Delaney had worthily filled the noble picture-gallery designed by his progenitor; and the present had furnished the library with equal regard to everything except expense: whilst all of them had practised largely the unprofitable virtues of hospitality, generosity, independence, and disinterestedness. There were no placeholders or place-hunters in their long line.

Their very pride, and proud they were, was based upon a scorn of meanness in every form.

In the present head of that old house, a

peculiar sense of locality, a clinging to early feelings would, Mr. Langhton knew, add tenfold bitterness to the bitter draught which he had to administer. At Atherton he had been born. There he had wooed and wedded the beautiful wife whose untimely death had left him a bereaved and solitary man. Four lovely children, of whom the youngest only survived, had been born there; and three had been buried in the same church with their mother—the same church where their parents' marriage had been celebrated. Every association of bliss and of sorrow, the joy bells and the funeral knell bound him to Atherton.

“ Latterly, indeed, for very love of that dear home, he had resided there less constantly. He could not bear to look upon the scenes he was so soon to lose. But there he was expected this evening to meet his only son, a distinguished young

officer, who, although long absent with his regiment, in the Peninsula, at Waterloo, in France, fully participated in this tenacious fondness for the seat of his ancestors, the home of his youth.

The thought of the unworthy possessor who would step into their place was the bitterest drop of all.

An orphan relation, the son of a cousin-german of Lord Delaney's father, had been educated, fitted out, and sent to India by his generous kinsman. Those were days in which men of good abilities, of a determined spirit, and not too sturdy a morality, still contrived to make fortunes in our Eastern empire. Bold, ambitious, subtle, and supple, Vivian Delaney was the very man to succeed there. He became governor of one of our richest provinces, and wealth gathered round him, no one knew how. Whilst still in the vigour of life, he returned to England in

the full hope (for hitherto everything had prospered with him) that the sickly lord whom he had left and his puny boy would both be dead before his arrival. Some flattering correspondent, who had read his heart too well, and wanted a favour, had sent him word that they were actually dying; and believing what he wished, he expected, on landing in England, to find no obstacle between himself and the ancestral title.

Half of his hope was fulfilled. His kind benefactor was dead; but the young heir had shot into a vigorous man, strong and hardy as one of the oaks in his own park, and was upon the point of marriage to the lovely but unportioned daughter of a country gentleman.

The young lord invited his cousin to Atherton; and with characteristic treachery, partly from love, partly from this old and well-concealed hate (for there is no

greater quickener of a puny love than a deep hatred) the Indian cousin entered the lists as a suitor. The fair Helen, unlike her namesake, proved constant to the betrothed lover who had first won her maiden heart. They were married, but not until calumny upon calumny, insult upon insult, had provoked a challenge, the result of which left Vivian Delancy with a bullet in his shoulder, and a vow of vengeance in his heart.

From this hour the pertinacious and unscrupulous man pursued the ruin of his rival with a bitterness of determination, a concentrated malice which became the ruling passion of his strong nature. He followed vengeance in England as in India he had followed gold, the rather that a remote but patient hope of attaining the ultimate object of his ambition—the family estates; a hope that seemed to grow by delay, mingled with the lust of

revenge, and seemed favoured by circumstances.

An old relation, to whom, had he died intestate, Lord Delancy would have been the legal heir, had long promised to bequeath his great wealth to the head of the house, not merely from affection towards his kinsman, but for the purpose of clearing the family property, and placing the old name in the high position which it had so long occupied in the country. This promise, voluntarily made, increased the carelessness as to pecuniary matters which had been the solitary sin of the race. The pledge had been renewed on Lord Delancy's marriage to a portionless beauty. Mr. Langhton had himself drawn up the will.

Nearly twenty years after, the aged cousin died, and a later will was produced, bequeathing the entire property to Sir Vivian, who had long since, to his infinite

disgust—he, who valued only an old peerage—been included in a batch of baronets. The whole household was in consternation. No one had suspected the intention or the act; and upon a closer investigation, a paper, wanting certain formalities, was discovered, re-bequeathing all to his beloved kinsman and godson, Arthur, Lord Delancy. Then, when this paper was rejected for informality, a third document was discovered—the copy of a letter addressed to the solicitor who had drawn the second will—directing its destruction.

Imagine the materials for litigation in this complication of circumstances! What were the actual facts of the case, nobody could venture to pronounce. No quarrel had taken place between the testator and his declared heir. But they lived in distant counties; the omission of a visit, the misconstruction of a letter, the mere caprice of age, might have caused his

change of intention. On the other hand, the known character of the claimant gave, to all acquainted with him, ample reason for a suspicion of foul play. Witness after witness came forward to give testimony to that effect; and a missing valet was chased over three parts of the globe, who could prove, they said, the writing and the delivery of the letter of which the copy had been produced. The fate of this man was never clearly ascertained; but it was at last supposed, and probably with truth, that he was amongst the passengers who perished in the wreck of a vessel bound to Canada.

Years had passed away in this miserable litigation; anxiety had succeeded to anxiety; suspense to suspense; trial to trial; and now, after enormous expenditure, the final decision had been given against Lord Delaney; and the last lingering hope had died away for ever.

The termination of the great will cause was of course known to all parties ; but a far severer blow was yet to come. Suspicions had been awakened that the money so long, and with so fatal a facility, advanced on mortgage, had been lent through a third person. This suspicion was now proved to be correct, and the real mortgagee—he who, after some months and some few formalities, could eject the present occupier from all his ancestral estates; from Delancy, the old northern hold, and Atherton, the beloved home, with their affectionate tenantry and matchless collections, was no other than their adversary in the lawsuit, the ungrateful and revengeful kinsman.

To talk over this painful termination of a cause, of which he had always dreaded the result, was Mr. Langhton's business at the Hall. His hard features twitched as he thought of the conversation he had to

go through. He had armed himself with a choice copy of Lord Berner's Translation of Froissart, as a present to his brother bibliomaniac—a tall copy, in all the glory of its original binding, with silver tips and silver clasps, picked up at a sale fabulously cheap. But he knew that, talk as they might of the chivalrous old chronicler, who seemed born to immortalise high deeds, and of the brave Englishman, who seemed born for no purpose but to translate him, the words might issue from their lips, but their hearts would be far away.

The young heir, too, the gallant soldier, Arthur Delancy, returning to the home of his fathers, only to hear that that home must be abandoned for ever! Arthur, whom he had loved as a son from earliest childhood! “That accursed lawsuit!” thought the good lawyer. And no stronger proof can be given of the sincerity of his interest in his clients than to say, that his

own predictions as to the result having been so completely verified, never once crossed his mind as a consolation.

Such were the dark thoughts which caused Stephen Langhton's foot to rest for a moment on the step of the post-chaise which had waited to convey him to the Hall. Ascertaining, even in the midst of his troubles, the safety of the precious Froissart, he sent in Mrs. Bell and Katy, who had attended him to the door with eager hospitality, and turned to take a parting look at the farm.

There it stood, with the bright fires glowing through the windows in parlour and hall, the glancing lights within the house, and the ruddy glare of lanterns passing from stable to cow-stall, and from cow-stall to calf-pen, with all its cheerful sights and rural sounds, the very image of rustic plenty. The view brought other speculations to the mind of our good

lawyer. "I found this place," thought he, "the abode of peace and comfort, when I came bearing the tidings of this new wealth to disturb its tranquillity. Can content and wealth keep house together? Can a child, so rich, so pretty, so innocent, and so confiding, be trusted with that simple mother, and that single-minded grandmother? The world is full of snares, even this little world of Atherton. As yet, she had seen nobody more dangerous than the lads of the Rectory, to whom she is probably only a gayer and a wilder sister, a playfellow or a plaything. But how long will this last? Money, and the want of money, form half the trials of this life." Money, and the want of money! the approximation seemed to suggest yet another train of reflections as the chaise threaded the winding village street, and passed through the richly-worked iron gates, and between the stately lodges of Atherton Park.

Even in a November night that fine scenery retained its characteristic beauty. The moon, almost at the full, shed a silvery light upon the dewy lawns; just touching the brown tops of the huge oaks, that stood out as headlands or promontories from the deep woods, which stretched up the hills on either side; or flinging a dark shadow from the clumps of holly, hawthorn, birch, and beech, which, mingled with single trees, dotted the foreground. Just beneath the eye, a broad stream was crossed by a low bridge of several arches, and after many windings, swelled out in the lower portion of the park, into a picturesque lake.

Half-way up the ascent, the mansion, a noble Palladian structure of white stone, lay bathed in the moonshine. The long colonnades which joined the centre to the wings, and the deep-pillared portico, with its rich Corinthian capitals, which swept

down by broad flights of steps to the terrace, and its massive balustrade, gave back the light from pediment to capital, from capital to basement, almost as vividly as at noon-day. A lime-tree avenue, leading to other lodges, just showed through a vista its high-arched branches and chequered ground. The faint odours of the decaying leaves marked the season, and the peculiar scent of a group of towering Lombardy poplars, which rose like columns on a point of land near the bridge, literally perfumed the air.

Perfect tranquillity was the characteristic of the scene. Here and there a majestic swan seemed sleeping on the water, or a single deer, startled by the sound of the rumbling vehicle, darted from its bed of withered fern, under some gnarled and twisted hawthorn, to bound across the lawn. All else seemed at rest; and the house, when,

after half-an-hour's drive, the traveller reached it, might have passed for uninhabited. Such, however, was not the case. The visitor was clearly expected. At the first sound of the wheels, a light appeared in the hall ; and before the postilion had rung the bell, two servants flung open the folding doors, and ushered him into the half-lighted library, where father and son advanced to meet him.

CHAPTER V.

FATHER AND SON.

FATHER and son, the two gentlemen to whom Mr. Langhton was conducted, evidently were. In point of figure, tall, erect, and stately,—they might almost have passed for brothers; in face, too, the resemblance was most striking. It was the same head in youth and in age. The general expression was alike in both—grave, thoughtful, calm, and aristocratic. But the guest soon perceived a peculiar look in the elder man—worn, anxious, distressed, which seemed to have added

ten years to his age in as many weeks ; deepening the lines about the mouth and on the pale forehead ; converting into a permanent frown that which before denoted only pensiveness ; sinking his eyes deep under their brows, and robbing them of gaiety and sweetness ; thinning and whitening the hair, which three months before had been as brown and as glossy as the crisp curls of his son.

As he grasped the hand of his old friend and schoolfellow, Lord Delancy exclaimed :

“ You have no good news for me, Stephen, or you would have come here earlier. You would have come before the time,” continued he, as Mr. Langhton, transferring the Froissart from one arm to the other, began taking out his watch ; “ I know it is the hour that I mentioned, but with good news you would have flown.”

“ Nay, my dear lord, I am here as soon as I thought it likely that I should find you

and my young friend. And for my news, that is no worse than it needs must be. You yourself had little doubt but Sir Vivian was the real holder of the mortgages?"

"And now it is sure?"

A sad shake of the head—for a shake of the head may be affirmative, and when so is always sad—was the only answer.

"All the mortgages?" interposed Major Delaney.

"All," was the reply. "He has contrived to buy up every security, although some dated as far back as your great-grandfather's time."

"Well, dear father, surely it is good to know this; good to have no more struggle; good to have done at once with a losing fight; good to relinquish for ever a false position. Let the estates be given up. I am ready to sign whatever papers may be necessary. There may be such; for I

remember once, this man (and for that I thank him) gave me credit for ratifying all that you had promised, and advanced a large sum, without waiting for my signature. That at least proved him not quite a stranger to the blood of the—”

“Oh! my son, my son! to ruin such a son!”

“Nay, my dear father, hear me out. Let all be done at once; all given up, all sold, all paid. Surely the proceeds—”

“Will not be sufficient to pay Langhton’s bill,” exclaimed Lord Delancy.

“Pshaw! my bill! Wait till I ask for it,” interjected the lawyer.

“And of other debts than these mortgages, you know,” proceeded Arthur, “that you have wisely kept clear. No honest tradesmen will be ruined by our ruin. The proceeds of such personal property as has never been put in pledge, will, I firmly believe, defray every just

claim, and leave enough for the purchase of such an annuity as will maintain you in comfort and in independence. Or if not, let us dispose of my commission. The world does not want ways by which a young and healthy man may win an honourable livelihood. Even in the midst of this new peace, my own bad trade is not without its prospects. Let me go as a volunteer to India, to South America—wherever warfare flourishes—and you will see that I shall prosper as others have done before me. Only let all be given up at once, and trust me, we shall be happier and richer than we have been during this miserable struggle against an overwhelming destiny. Only let all be given up.”

“To him!” exclaimed Lord Delancy, suddenly pausing in the rapid walk up and down the room, by which he had been striving to throw off some of the irritation which shook the bodily frame even to

agony. "Yield to him the home of my fathers! disinherit for him a son of whom the noblest of my ancestors might have been proud! Transfer to him my attached tenants, my affectionate peasantry! Make him the master here, where, bred and fostered like a child of the house, he raised his hand against the son of his benefactor! He left this place vowing eternal gratitude. See," continued he, throwing a tattered letter upon the table; "I found that scrawl the other day. The very ink has faded, as refusing to perpetuate professions so false! the paper has crumbled away like his promises. He left this house poor and abject; he returned to it rich and insolent."

"You disappointed him, my dear lord. He left you a sickly child, never likely to survive the trials of school, and the temptations of college. He expected to find you dead, and there you stood, tall and stout,

on the point of marriage to the prettiest woman in the county."

"Poor Helen! she feared him as an evil spirit."

"She disappointed him too. He expected her to throw over the man of her heart, as fine a young fellow in those days as Arthur is now, in favour of a rival as dry and gnarled and yellow as a bamboo-cane."

"Poor, poor Helen! That rivalry was her first grief, and his threats, vague and worthless as they seemed then, not only embittered but shortened her life."

"Your good father," resumed Lord Delaney, again pausing in his walk, "always said that as a child, a mere child, I had once offended this cousin, then a youth; and that his hatred dated from that hour."

"For my part," returned Stephen, "I firmly believe that the hatred and the love

were both subservient to the ambition. He courted Helen Aubrey, in the hope of preventing your marriage, whilst he accomplished his own, taking the chance of your throwing yourself into dissipation, or in any event not speedily settling, so that he might still retain his place as heir-presumptive to the title. The duel had the same object in view; whilst this affair of the will and of the mortgages, is still a step in the same direction. He can't get the old barony; so he'll be content with the old estates."

"He has only to live long enough," observed Arthur, "and he may be the possessor of both; for I do not think my dear father likely to marry, and I am perfectly certain that I never shall."

"Phew! phew!" whistled the old lawyer, a most incredulous whistle it was. "Live to my age before you make a vow of celibacy, and don't be too sure of keeping it then."

“Sir Vivian may soon resume his place in the Peerage, as heir-presumptive,” said Lord Delaney. “When the new owner takes possession of the mansion, the old master will find room in the family vault.”

“Dear father !”

“Lord Delaney !”

And the one speaker led him affectionately to a seat: whilst the other instinctively laid a strong grip on the travelling-pistols, which, mixed with other loose baggage, the servants had thrown on one of the tables.

“Nay, Stephen, you may spare that precaution—I had no intention to alarm you, my dear son. But more men die of a broken heart than we read of in the bills of mortality. And to think that my own obstinacy and improvidence should have aided this man’s villainy, to disinherit such a son as Arthur, might kill a stronger man than I.”

“I will not listen to such words, dear father!”

“Nor I,” quoth Stephen. “Besides, I have a remedy in my head.”

“Do you remember, Arthur,” said his father, “the beautiful group of witch-elms on the west lawn? Artists used to travel from London to sketch them. There was a tradition that under them the family plate had been buried in Cromwell’s time, when, what with sieges, fires, and sequestrations, our declension began. Well! the tallest of these trees was stricken, they tell me, by the great gale this equinox—”

“And falling luckily,” interrupted Stephen, “against the tree next in point of size, and nearest in point of situation, was propped by that friendly supporter; so that it has been found possible to replace the noble tree, (you know how clever a fellow Lawson the woodman is!)

and there it stands, the goodly witch-elm, as firmly rooted as ever. Omen for omen, my good lord! Mrs. Bell and Katy, to the full as superstitious as yourself, went to see it yesterday. They told me the whole story but now."

Lord Delancy shook his head, as unwilling to accept the augury. The son and the friend gazed for a moment on that other noble tree, which seemed quivering to its fall. Their eyes met. But Stephen's tone had lost nothing of its cheerfulness, as he exclaimed suddenly:

"Apropos to Mrs. Bell's tea-table, where I heard this news, you seem to forget that neither you nor Arthur have taken any dinner, and that I myself, although fresh from that region of hospitality, shall be none the worse for a cutlet and a glass of wine. I have a project for you, my good friends, for both of you, and for that determined bachelor, Master Arthur, in particular; a

project to propose, and a story to tell. But not a syllable shall you hear until you have taken some refreshment. Besides which, this affair of the mortgage is in no such hurry. Some impertinent wit has said that 'luckily law always takes time to do justice.' Now I append to that, speaking in honour of the mistress whom I serve, that to commit injustice, Law also takes her leisure. The notice of foreclosure is not served yet. And after that, we have six months good. Let us go to dinner; after which we can talk matters over calmly. Some very strange events have occurred within these few days, events altering the prospects of some of these good folks at Atherton not a little."

"Good folks of Atherton!" cried Arthur. "What can that mean? Our friends of the Rectory?"

"Ha! I am glad to see that you have sense enough to be curious, Major. They

call curiosity a female passion, but I call it a search after knowledge, and would not give up my right to a fair share of so good a quality to any woman in the world. However, you must keep your spirit of inquiry under subordination for the present, for not a syllable shall you hear until dinner be fairly past."

"Relentings on the part of your cousin!" quoth Mr. Langhton, some two hours after the foregoing conversation, when a few glasses of champagne had brought a little blood into Lord Delancy's cheeks, "sales to some other party! Pshaw! he has your title-deeds as closely locked up as his own heart. No, my plan has nothing to do with mortgages or parchments. It bears a far more attractive form. What do you think of matrimony, Arthur? A man is never so near to becoming a bridegroom as when he has just made a vow to die a bachelor. What

say those excellent reporters, the dramatists? Look into all the cases from Benedick downward. My proposal is neither more nor less than a pretty young wife."

The suddenness of this announcement startled both his hearers, transferring to Arthur's countenance the paleness which had before overspread his father's.

"You have often said, my dear boy, that you would do anything in the wide world to avert this misery. And I fully believe you, for all that lay in your power in the way of self-sacrifice, you have done. If you had not broken the entail to pursue this long law chase, the estates here and in the north, would have been preserved to you. Of you, therefore, I feel certain. What I have to ask on your part, my dear lord, is the sacrifice of a little pride of birth and alliance. Nothing else. For besides

that the money, far more than enough to clear every debt, is absolutely in my own hands, the little heiress through whom it must be won, is as good, and as pretty, and as certain to grace your old coronet, as if she were a duke's daughter."

And then he told the story of Katy's legacy, and how the thought of a marriage between the two young people, each of whom had undergone so strange a transition of fortune, had darted into his thoughts. His strong feeling for both parties lent truth and earnestness to the manner in which he set forth his project ; oversetting with much dexterity, Lord Delaney's objections, and opposing with characteristic skill the portrait of Sir Vivian, lord of Atherton, to that of dear, good Mrs. Bell, loud, ruddy, vulgar, and fine, as the mother of his daughter-in-law, a picture from which the fastidious gentleman shrank with instinctive repugnance.

“Never mind Mrs. Bell,” quoth our friend Stephen, “I’ll answer for her never speaking three sentences in your lordship’s presence. Besides, I’ll get Mary Osborne to dress her. That little woman, my partner’s wife, is a jewel. She is to get a governess for Katy. Never trouble yourself about Mrs. Bell. Think of Mrs. Warner. Sweet old Mrs. Warner! fair, delicate, and simple as a female Friend; fit at this very moment to take her place in your picture gallery. And Katy, think of her; Reynolds might have painted them both. Indeed, they are exactly the pure English beauties that he did paint.”

“Remember though,” added he, as they rose to take coffee in the library, “that I cannot promise my gallant friend here more than a chance of the young heiress. But considering all things, the hereditary respect for the family; the

habit of thinking Atherton Hall a finer place than Chatsworth, and Lord Delancy a greater man than the Duke of Devonshire; remembering also the advantages of military distinction, and military bearing, to say nothing of other good gifts; and, above all, considering the prodigious power of opportunity, and of being the first to pour sweet truths into the fair lady's ear; putting together, I say, all these elements of success, I entertain very little doubt of carrying off the prize."

"A word with you," said Arthur, stopping Mr. Langhton, as they followed Lord Delancy through the hall, "one word."

"Not if it be an objection," replied the solicitor. "Are you too possessed of the devil called Pride?"

"Pride, situated as we are!" said Arthur. "But this marriage, which after all is mercenary? this availing ourselves

of a position which is totally changed? of advantages which are vanished? My dear father, carried away by his notions of family dignity, and by paternal partiality, does not see this; but you—”

“Be quite sure that every particular of your situation shall be made known to Mrs. Warner before to-morrow night. And be sure, also, that with her feeling towards you and my good lord, the prospect that this wealth may prevent the great wrong that would otherwise take place, will be one of the consolations for the dangerous change in her sweet child’s destiny. Both she and Mrs. Bell expressed strong alarm at the chance of her falling into the hands of some one who would look down upon her, or teach her to look down on them. They will seek for nothing but high character in Katy’s husband. Neither shall I. And I never gave so strong a proof of my respect and

esteem, as well as my affection, as when I selected you as the happy man. Have you any other objection to offer?"

"Only my utter averseness to the marriage state."

"Averseness! Does that mean a fancy for another woman? Are you in love? Are you engaged?"

"No, upon my honour; I am as free as yourself."

"So much the better. If you had been engaged—"

"I tell you, No. But to marry this young girl merely for her money—"

"Pshaw! pshaw! a romantic scruple like that is an anachronism in these days. Leave me to take care of my ward. Look at your father. Four hours ago, I would not have insured his life for a month; and now the very chance of escaping from the venom of that cold-blooded Indian snake, has acted upon him like the fabled

elixir. You, too, are fitted for another age, with your hatreds and your delicacies. But just think of him, and of all the sacrifices you have made, and do not render them vain by starting off at last. Sacrifice !” exclaimed he with enthusiasm, “I ought to be hanged for using the word in connection with the brightest and sweetest little rosebud that ever blossomed in a country garden. And you ought to be hanged if you are not over head and ears in love with her before three months are past. Take the word of an old man who has seen a good deal of this best of all possible worlds, and has had occasion to observe pretty often that in fulfilling our duties at the expense of our fancies, we are generally sure to be rewarded even in this life. Would not any one think I was urging you to marry the Urganda of a fairy tale ?”

“I don’t care for beauty,” interrupted Arthur.”

“I do,” said his companion, “in common with most men. And you will be a person of a singular taste if you do not think her beauty of a very attractive sort. Now let us go to your father. I have a present for him in his way and mine; a choice old book, picked up for a song. I did not dare produce it before; but by this time, thanks to our project, he’ll be able to look at and enjoy it. Is not this worth something, Master Mercenary?”

CHAPTER VI.

HEIR-HUNTING.

ON his return to town, one of Mr. Langhton's first visits was to the abode of his partner, Mr. Osborne, a clever man of five-and-thirty, who, originally an articled clerk in the house, had been taken into the firm without money, on the strength of his abilities and his character—points in which the senior partner was seldom mistaken. A year or two before he had taken to himself the questionable luxury of a wife; and our old bachelor, fond, after his fashion, of James Osborne, and

accustomed to command his society at breakfast and dinner, grumbled over a measure which threatened to deprive him of his company during many a quiet evening in Norfolk Street. "Now," thought he, with the grunt of a deeply-injured man, "he'll be going home."

Matters were not greatly mended when he found that Mr. Osborne made of his young wife a universal authority and referee in all matters extra-legal, even when they seemed most unfit for a wearer of petticoats. If Mr. Langhton happened to inquire :

"What did that De Bry fetch at Evans's?" the answer was :

"I'll ask Mary."

If, "What can I have done with the Dugdale?"

"Mary can tell."

Mary could get an authentic copy of the Ban of the Empire. Mary

knew where to send for the score of the "Requiem."

The clouds began to disperse when Stephen discovered that Mrs. Osborne really knew those things of which her husband boasted, and she did not; and the sky grew quite clear when he heard from his housekeeper that his Kendal pudding was made from her recipe, and that his warm winter hose were knitted in the charity school of her father's parish; in short, that she was not that odious thing, a female Encyclopædia, but an observing and intelligent woman, who knew where to find knowledge, and considered no trouble too great, no object too small, so that it enabled her to gratify her husband's friend.

"She's a clever little body," thought our friend; and will have performed my commission, if anybody can, and found me a governess who will teach dear Katy

to conceal the adorable ignorance which would affront this accomplished age; and fill at the same time, the part of adviser-general at the farm. To think that it should fall to my lot to conduct a whole feminine household; I, who have always eschewed the company of women! and to have the disposal of a great heiress—I, an old bachelor of fifty-seven! Poor, pretty Katy! I wish Arthur Delancy liked her better. But he's a noble fellow, and the love will come in time. She cannot choose but like him; she who has seen nothing better than the Glenham boys, and the clodhoppers of the village."

This meditation brought him to the tasteful cottage at Chelsea, where his partner had fixed his abode. He found Mrs. Osborne, and lost no time in inquiring if her search had been successful.

"Yes, I know such a person," replied his hostess, with rather more hesitation

than was usual with her ; “ exactly such a person as you desire.”

“ Well ? ”

“ And she has requested me to look out for a family in want of a governess.”

“ Well, then, send for her directly.”

“ There is not far to send, Sir ; she is in this very house. But she is my old school-fellow and very dear friend ; and I cannot bear to think of her filling a dependent situation. She is the orphan daughter of an officer. Her father and her only brother died shortly after each other ; her mother she had lost before ; and an aunt with whom she went to reside, turning out that terrible thing, a match-maker.” (Here Mr. Langhton winced a little, and uttered an audible grunt, so that the fair speaker interrupted her narration.) “ Surely, dear Sir, you have no love of husband-hunting chaperons, who hawk about poor girls for the highest bidder ? ”

“None whatever. But as to match-making, that is a different matter. There are matchmakers and matchmakers, as Molière’s Sganarelle says of faggots. Go on with your story.”

“Well, finding herself put up to sale, and her aunt indignant at her refusal of a man utterly unworthy of her, poor Honor wrote to me, requesting me to inquire for a situation as governess—any situation, the more retired the better, where she might earn an honest living. And here she has been for the last three weeks, during which time, Sir, we have seen too little of you, or I am sure you would like her.”

“You mean Miss Clive, my dear? I do like her, and I like her spirit. She will be much happier with good Mrs. Warner, than with all the husband-hunting aunts in the world. She’ll be the very person to form Katy. Those soft, gentle

manners are just what we want at the Great Farm."

"And she is so good, Sir," said Mrs. Osborne, much gratified by this approbation. "Mind, manners, and temper are equally excellent. As for her accomplishments—"

"Spare me the emuneration: good sense, good principles, and good temper, are what we want. The fewer accomplishments the better for my little rustic. The new fortune will be disadvantage enough. Do not let us add new knowledge. Nothing is so bad as an attempt at acquiring that which there is no time to learn. It is combining pretence and pretension. Engage Miss Clive, of course, not as a governess, but as a friend. I give you *carte-blanche* as to salary."

"But, dear sir, I know her well, and am confident that she will not accept more than is right and usual. You will find

her an untractable person on certain points."

"I shall like her all the better. How could this aunt of hers venture to propose an unworthy marriage to such a woman! I leave you, my dear, to arrange matters for me. Contrive, if you can, that Miss Clive should be ready to accompany me to Atherton as soon as may be after my return from Buckinghamshire."

The good lawyer's expedition to Buckinghamshire was another branch of the duties thrown upon him by this executorship.

During his absence, an artificer, cunning in the miser's paraphernalia of false bottoms and secret drawers; springs that no eye could detect, and locks that no hand could open, disclosed in the deepest profundity of an iron chest, a cavity filled with bank-notes and bills, at once more portable and more negotiable than the

bulkier bonds, mortgages, and title-deeds which crammed almost to bursting the upper part of the coffer. Strange is the contrast of these yellow parchments and discoloured papers, ghastly representatives of wealth, to the hoards on which our ancestors delighted to luxuriate: the kingly coin, stately with its crowned impress; the heavy ingots of glittering silver or virgin gold; the ropes of pearl; the dazzling heaps of precious stones, ruby, topaz, amethyst, emerald, sapphire, diamond; such were the rich sights on which the misers of Massinger and Ben Jonson gloated. Those great old poets would have scorned this unimaginative age, where Mammon, stripped of all his gorgeous accessories, shows himself in all his naked deformity, barely covered by a sordid panoply of rags.

In that innermost receptacle of the money-chest, so cunningly hidden, were two or three papers, which seemed at first

to have small reference to the cheques and bank-bills by which they were surrounded. Their pecuniary value was indeed very trifling. The first document was an old almanac of the year 177—. The others consisted of two or three notes, of which the writer was evidently a woman, addressed to Mr. Richard Strange, and signed E. Brown; a note of hand for twenty pounds, bearing the signature of John Brown; and the rough copy of a letter, at once a declaration of love and a proposal of marriage, to which, on perusal of one of the notes, was a gentle refusal.

Here was a curious episode in a miser's life. The rough draft of the love-letter was brief and characteristic, but not ineloquent. True feeling always finds true words. Very real must that passion have been which induced Richard Strange to offer his hand to a girl evidently without fortune, and induced him to name her de-

scendants the heirs of so large a portion of his riches, after an interval of nearly fifty years. The notes signed "E. Brown" were dated Weston; but that address, which indeed they already possessed, was the only indication to be gained from this love hoard. The almanac at first appeared to bear no relation to the event. But in the months of July and August were found small marginal notes, such as "Walked in the woods with Betsy." "Bought a keepsake for Betsy." "Wrote to Betsy." And on the succeeding day was a final note, summed up in two brief words:—"Went away."

Our old bachelor sighed over those brief words, sympathizing the rather with the suffering, that the sufferer had abstained from all complaint, even to that mute confidant, the almanac. How different might his life have been had that offer been accepted.

Turning to his own business, Mr. Langhton felt that no further revelation was to be expected from the testator's papers. Advertising was his only hope. Indeed, the moment the cavity was discovered, Mr. Osborne had multiplied advertisements, thicker and wider, in almost every newspaper in town and country. These advertisements were, as usual, fruitful in answers. The Norfolk Street postman bent under their weight, and doubted whether Valentine's Day had not come before its time.

Every Weston in England had produced its record of John or Elizabeth Brown. Some a John; some an Elizabeth; some both. Here they were christened; here married; here buried. The good lawyer groaned in spirit; the rather that the indications were so slight that it would be almost impossible for the most practised and subtle tracer of genealogies to follow

such a trail. However, as the Buckinghamshire Weston (Cowper's Weston) offered the nearest approach to the family group which he dimly guessed at, a John Brown having been married, and an Elizabeth Brown christened there about twenty years before the date of the almanac, he resolved to undertake the journey; unconsciously, perhaps, influenced by a desire to examine the scenery of the "Task," a poem which, in its purely English feelings, its homeliness, and its teachings, appealed strongly to his sympathies and his prejudices.

Upon his arrival at the little inn he found that it was already the object of no unfrequent pilgrimage.

"Old inhabitant, Sir?" quoth a voluble waiter. "Mr. Cowper of course. Plenty of people who remember him hereabouts. Very shy, Sir! But very kind-hearted."

Here Stephen attempted to interpose a word.

“Parish Clerk, Sir! No use, Sir! Won’t find Mr. Cowper in the Register. Gentleman came last summer, and hunted it all through. Was not born here, Sir! Was never married! and died many a good mile away, poor gentleman. Not in the Register I assure you.”

Again Mr. Langhton tried to explain his wants.

“Not Mr. Cowper, Sir! Not the great poet! Bless me, Sir! People of the name of Brown? Yes, Sir. I’ll ask directly. Would you not like to look at Mr. Cowper’s house, meanwhile, Sir? Get you a boy in a minute. All the boys know the way. Want to know about the Browns, and to see the old people? Yes, Sir. Directly, Sir. Plenty of old women, Sir; know two close by, Sir, who have lived here all their lives. Mr. Cowper, poor gentleman, was very good to one of them, and so were Mr. Hayley, and Mr.

Johnson. Fetch them, Sir? Yes, Sir. They shall be here as soon as you have eaten your dinner, Sir. Broiled fowl and mushrooms, Sir? Yes, Sir. In a jiffy, Sir."

Meanwhile, Mr. Langhton having ascertained that the clerk could only tell him what the Register told; and that the cramped, uneven signature of the bridegroom therein, bore no sort of resemblance to the bold characters of the John Brown in the note of hand, did actually, in spite of his disclaimer to the waiter, solace himself by a visit to the house which the poet loved so well, and which drew from him perhaps the most pathetic letter on record—that in which he recognizes his own malady by the touching words, "I will forget that a letter from me can only be regarded as a curiosity."

Musing over the sad mystery of that strange affliction; the alternations of

darkness and light, the enchanting playfulness of the letters, and Hayley's affecting narrative of the long, miserable years that preceded his death, a story full of wilder contrasts and deeper poetry than any which the poor poet ever wrote, our friend forgot how time went, and found the little waiter much propitiated by the length of his absence, and a glimpse of the volume which he carried in his hand.

“Dinner ready? Yes, Sir. Got quite cold. Warm it in a trice, Sir. Thought you'd never come here without visiting the Poet's house, Sir. A good deal changed, but something left still, Sir. Thought you'd visit the old walks, and the Hall, Sir. Talk of taking it down, Sir. Glad you came first. Got the old women? Yes, Sir. See them now, Sir? Before dinner? Yes, Sir.”

And he produced two crones, who in point of age might have officiated as wit-

nesses, or if needful, as bridesmaids at John Brown's wedding seventy years before. Their examination nearly drove our friend Stephen crazy. One was paralytic, the other deaf.

The palsied hag was possessed with one single idea (her Brunonian theory) of a Jesse Brown, whom she had known in her youth, and who lay buried in the churchyard, having died when a promising youth, "fourteen year old and a bittock." Apparently he was alone in his generation; for to every question respecting his probable kith and kin, father, mother, brother, sisters, uncle, aunt or cousin, every possible owner of the desired christian names, she returned no better answer than a stolid "No." Whilst her brisker partner was so deaf that she would hardly have heard a pistol fired at her ear, could not read, and all the shouting of the enraged lawyer and his ally the waiter, who

brought all his powers of speech to bear on the object, failed to drive into her head the sound of Brown, or of any other monosyllable, proximate or remote. The old woman looked, and was thoroughly mystified. At last a bright illumination flashed upon her. The one name of the place sprang from her lips :

“ Ay, Sir, of course, Mister Cowper ! Nobody can tell you more of him, poor gentleman. I chared for Madame Unwin—”

What might be the exclamation that escaped from her hearer she heard not, nor need we inquire. Never was Stephen Langhton known to swear before or since. And if in that moment the words were naughty, the provocation was great. One thing is certain : that flinging his tormentors half-a-crown apiece, he drove back to London, determined, for the health of his soul and body, to eschew personal

encounters with chattering waiters and stupid old women; and to refer the inquiry to the geniuses of the Chancery Court or the Herald's Office, who can track a genealogy for half a century, through no clearer indications than a torn letter or a defaced tombstone. The race of Detectives had not yet found a name, but the speciality has never been wanting. And our friend, both as a man of the world, and a great London lawyer, had a faith that nothing could remain secret in the face of a large reward. "This is a question of supply and demand," thought he, "money wants Betsy Brown, and money must find her."

CHAPTER VII.

KATY'S LEGACY. THE NEWS OF ATHERTON.

OUR story returns to the Great Farm at the moment of the discovery.

The news of Katy's legacy spread like wildfire through the village of Atherton. In spite of her mother's quarrel with Mrs. Glenham, the good grandmother had a deep respect for her pastor, as well for his character as his office; as, indeed, no sounder scholar or better man ever edited a play of Euripides. She fully intended to call upon him the next morning and carry herself the grand intelligence; but long before Mr. Langhton had left her lit-

the parlour, the story was patent in every corner of the place, the Rectory included.

Indeed, when we remember that Rachel and her undermaidens, the rosy-cheeked Sally, and Dinah the plump dairy-girl, were present at its announcement, the wonder would have been if it had remained a secret.

Rachel, half beside herself with delight, could not help giving vent to her ecstacy to her old fellow-servant, Joseph Stokes, as he sate gravely discussing his bargain with the dealer; and thereupon, between joy and gin-toddy, Joseph was beguiled into the very worst exchange of sheep for horned cattle that he ever made in his life.

Sally, the belle of the village, communicated the intelligence to two village beaux who paid homage to her rosy cheeks; a young carpenter and a younger blacksmith, jointly engaged in repairing a plough.

Dinah naturally told her tidings to the herdsman who drove the cows to the milking and the lad who helped her to milk.

Joseph told barnsmen, ploughmen, shepherds, and boys; and his little grandson, Jacob, who had picked up the news from the very first without any telling at all—to use his own phrase, “promiscuous like,”—little Jacob told everybody.

If verification were needed, it was supplied by Mrs. Bell herself, who sallied forth from the parlour, bearing a bottle in either hand, followed by her daughter with sugar and lemons, bent on compounding a noble bowl of punch, such a bowl as had not been seen at the Great Farm since Katy’s christening.

At the “Eight Bells,” at the “Delancy Arms,” at the shop, at the forge, nothing was talked of that night but Katy’s legacy. And considering the general aversion which is said to prevail in our poor

human nature, towards the good fortune that alights on other people's heads, and misses our own, it is creditable to our villagers to be able to record that they bore the glad tidings with fortitude and resignation.

Mrs. Warner's constant charity—charity of thought and speech, as well as of action—contributed doubtless to this result. It is difficult to speak evil of one who never says an unkind word of others. But that which most conciliated goodwill, was the universal impression of the young heiress's open hand.

“Well, little Miss is not so bad.”

“I know no harm of *she*.”

“I don't think she takes after her mother.”

(Dear Mrs. Bell played in this interlude the part of Alcibiades' dog's tail.)

“She'll not steal the bread from a poor creature's mouth.”

“She’s good to body and beast.”

Such were the general exclamations. And Katy vindicated the justice of public opinion in Atherton that very night; for after stuffing Flora with as much cream and buttered toast as that overfed favourite, who had never in her life known the pleasant sensation of a little gentle hunger, could be prevailed upon to swallow; she rescued her own particular attendant, Jacob Stokes, from the dangers of the punch-bowl, and seduced him into the stable, where they jointly committed petty larceny by opening certain bins of oats and beans well known to both, and bestowing a large benevolence of these luxuries, first on her own pony, next on Jacob’s donkey, (formerly Katy’s, but presented to Jacob when she and her side-saddle were promoted to her present steed); then indiscriminately to all the horses within reach of the accomplices.

After which they finished their evening's expedition by running down the lane to Dame Barnes's cottage, with such a basket of provisions, that the good woman declared that she and her three little grandchildren should not get through it in a week.

"To think," added she, "that Miss should have promised me a new gown! that in the midst of all this grandeur she should recollect a poor old creature that can only pray God to bless her!"

Perhaps Katy's happiest moment in that first night of almost boundless affluence, was this brief visit to Dame Barnes's hut.

The news reached the Rectory after the zig-zag fashion peculiar to country places, and with the exaggerations and variations common to all places, whether city or village.

The gardener, to adopt his own version,

“happened to call at the ‘Eight Bells,’” (he happened to call at one alehouse or another on most evenings), “and there he heard it was quite true, however strange it sounded, that Miss Katy had become a queen. He did not know of what foreign parts, but a queen she was, and with more money than the Queen of Sheba.”

N.B. It is just possible that the pet name bestowed upon her long ago by Mr. Langhton had something to say to that accession of dignity.

Mrs. Glenham laughed in scorn.

Then the housemaid went for a ball of cotton to the shop, and brought word back that, Lord Delancy’s titles and estates had fallen to Mrs. Warner.—Strange it is to trace those rumours that float in the air like thistle-down; pregnant warnings of the calamities of great houses!

Mrs. Glenham remained incredulous.

Next the carpenter brought at once a new bootjack and the real story, as he had received it from Sally, an ear-witness.

The Rector's lady, faithful to her doubts, began yet to suspect that some grains of truth might be mixed up with a mass of falsehood.

At last, the Rector's churchwarden, an intelligent man, and a native of Atherton, coming in to leave some papers, confirmed and explained the intelligence. He himself knew Mr. Strange, and was aware of the relationship; he had even heard, moreover, of his wealth. Besides, the quarter from whence the intelligence came, removed all possibility of error. Mr. Langhton was the most accurate of men; one who had never uttered an untruth or made a mistake in his whole existence.

Mrs. Glenham was astounded. This

was the little girl whose influence over her eldest son, the pride of her heart, she had so much dreaded. Ever since she had discovered certain stanzas to Laura, enclosed to her address, and had observed that his walks and rides, whichever way they seemed to tend on leaving home, invariably ended at the Great Farm, she had exerted all her address to keep the young people asunder. Her only comfort had been that the Laura of his rhymes seemed quite unconscious of the ardent poet's devotion, and in all their walks and parties, preferred the wild gaiety of Charles. She had expended all her skill and contrivance in parting those whom she would now give ten years of her life to bring together. It was just one of the reproofs so often administered by events to our wisest plans; and Mrs. Glenham, a clever woman, somewhat tinged by worldliness, but by no means the worthless fine

lady that Mrs. Bell thought her, felt its full force. In this mood she repaired to her husband's study.

There sat he, kindest and simplest of men, surrounded by his books, in the midst of various editions and German commentators, intent upon a much-disputed passage in a chorus of the Troades, and very unwilling to be disturbed, even if the house were on fire.

"Upon my word, Dr. Glenham," said his provoked lady, when she had twice poured her tale into unlistening ears; "it is a great pity that you ever left Cambridge. You are fit for nothing but to be a Fellow of a College and a Greek Professor."

"It is a pity," was the reply, delivered with provoking simplicity. "A College Fellowship is free from disturbance and care; and to have succeeded Porson would have been a noble destiny—I beg your pardon, my dear; I believe you have been

talking to me," continued he, with returning recollection; and when he at last caught the sense of her narrative, she had no cause to complain of any want of interest in the subject.

They talked it over in all its bearings, and the affectionate manner in which the good Rector spoke of the parishioners upon whom so trying a change of fortune had fallen so suddenly, emboldened Mrs. Glenham to say:

"Ay, now it would have been better for all parties, if we had encouraged Harry's admiration for our young friend. Her fortune—"

"Harry is to be a Fellow of a College, Mrs. Glenham," interrupted the Doctor, now thoroughly awakened to the realities of life, and asserting, with a manliness which became him well, the resolve of a most upright and honourable nature. "He has got King's, and must follow his

career at Cambridge, a career for which he is well fitted. In due time he may, if he see fit, take a living and settle. But as to the nonsense of which you speak, the love and the love-songs, why they have no more vitality than the sickly autumn rose which you are twirling in your hand, or the dead leaves which are falling from the great oak upon the window sill. If I were not sure of this, I would give instant notice to Mrs. Warner; as it is, I shall speak to Harry. I would rather see him the husband of the poorest girl in the village than that he should take advantage of my position as clergyman of the parish, and an old family friend, to pay his court to the rich heiress. It is our place to protect this young girl in a situation of temptation and danger, not to betray her into an unsuitable attachment. And now, my dear, go to your daughters, and leave me to the tragedy which earned for Euri-

pides the title of the most pathetic of poets.”

In all her life Mrs. Glenham had never seen her husband so determined. The only comfort was, that being a woman who had walked through the world with her eyes open, she had observed that in these cases a little opposition is no bad fosterer of love, and trusted that her son Harry might prove no exception to the perversity of his kind.

Meanwhile the year rolled on towards its conclusion. Lord Delancy and his son spent a fortnight at the Hall before separating, the one for his regiment, the other for London. The father's heart was lightened, and the daily improvement in his health and spirits cheered and comforted the young soldier.

Before three days had passed, her noble landlord had not failed to visit Mrs. Warner, and to become, as far as her shy-

ness and the recollection of the cherry-tree would permit, familiar with the young heiress. His air and figure and stately bearing made a good deal against the intimacy which he wished to establish, especially whilst they remained in the little parlour, where both he and the Major looked, as Katy afterwards observed, too tall for the room. His lordship returned the compliment, by declaring that poor Mrs. Bell was too broad for that small apartment, and looked in her new mourning not unlike a blackbird in a goldfinch's cage.

Out of doors matters mended; and in spite of the season, Lord Delaney took care to lure Katy out of doors, to visit her bantams, to look at her pony, and to show her a young greyhound which he had brought from the Hall, a beautiful creature of that peculiar hue, which coursers, as he remarked, are sure to miscall, sometimes yellow, sometimes red.

“She has no name yet. What shall she be called, Miss Warner?”

Katy did not speak; indeed, she had hardly ventured to say more than yes or no. But she gathered a flower from a lingering plant of African Marigold, which yet retained its richly-tinctured blossoms in a southern nook, and laid the clustering petals on the glossy head, which, with unfailing instinct, had already sought her caressing hand. Never were colours more perfectly matched.

The father was enchanted, and even Arthur smiled at the unspoken reply.

“Marigold by all means. A capital name. And see, Miss Warner, you have chosen her name, and she has chosen her mistress. You must not reject her. The moment I can get away from London we will have a day’s coursing in the Park. See, Mrs. Bell, how she lies down at her fair mistress’s feet, as if to take possession.”

“My father does not mean Marigold to supplant my friend Flora,” added Arthur, for Flora, with similar instinct, had made her court to him; “that in my mind would be a sin. The old favourite is sacred as the old friend. But where the heart is large, as I am sure yours is, we can find room for new friends and new favourites. Mrs. Warner says that Flora is too fat to keep pace with your walks and rides; so Marigold must be the out-door pet, whilst Flora retains her place on the hearth.”

And Mrs. Bell with many words, and Katy with smiles and blushes, accepted the gift.

An excellent excuse was this playful and graceful creature for frequent visits from the Hall. During which familiar intercourse Lord Delancy grew as fond of Katy as if she had been already his daughter, whilst an unexpected intimacy sprang up between Arthur, by no means so formid-

able a personage as he looked, and Mrs. Bell. He could hardly prefer her society to her daughter's, except, indeed, as a person whom he could by no chance be called upon to marry; but so it was, that while his father courted Katy for him, he paid suit and service to the comely widow, with whom he laughed and chatted for hours together. She repaid this devotion with interest.

“There is nobody like the Major,” quoth she, “nobody in all the world. To think of my having been such a fool as to be afraid of him. He has just sent this beautiful collar for Marigold; only look! it's exactly like a silver bit. And hearken to the little bells; she won't know where the sound comes from. And her name and Katy's on the padlock; a real dog's necklace. Katy, you don't look half grateful enough; not near so grateful as I was to you for that noble team of horses and their

bells. And I know what the Major is going to do besides."

"Well," said Katy, more curious than she chose to appear, "what?"

"Only if I tell you, you will say that I cannot keep a secret."

"Dear mamma, if it be really a secret, don't tell."

"Nobody told me. Suppose—"

"Well, but if it be a secret—"

"I found it out, I tell you. Suppose he has got a new horse for you, and is going to train it himself. What do you say to that?"

Katy listened and blushed, like a woman. Then, like a child as she was, burst into sudden laughter, clapped her hands, and danced about the room, whilst her mother nodded in triumph, and Mrs. Warner, evidently Mr. Langhton's accomplice, looked on with pleased approbation.

So matters stood at Atherton, when its noble master left the Hall.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GOVERNESS.

ANOTHER fortnight brought a more permanent visitor to the Farm. At the close of a short December day, Miss Clive arrived with Mr. Langhton.

All girls receive with some trepidation that alarming functionary, a governess; and it is probable that she who causes the fear, often feels herself a deeper emotion than she inspires.

Under the peculiar circumstances, all the ladies of the Farm were a little anxious, or, to use Mrs. Bell's phrase, more graphic than elegant, "in a flurry."

Mrs. Warner's head shook more than usual as she received the stranger; Mrs. Bell poured forth questions and hospitalities without stint or measure; and Katy's cheeks, always bright, glowed like damask roses. Except a little paleness, the governess gave no outward sign of disturbance. She had suffered too much not to be perfect in the great lesson of self-command.

"How do you like her?" asked Mr. Langhton of Mrs. Warner, when the younger ladies had taken her to show her her own apartment, and to adjust her dress.

"What do you think of her?"

"I think she looks good."

"And pretty?"

The old lady hesitated.

"Ah! I see that you do not. Neither did I at first, delicate, and graceful, and elegant as she is. To be sure, by the side of that bright little queen of ours, everything is dim. But you will think her pretty by-and-bye."

“She must be much better than pretty to have won your heart so entirely,” said Mrs. Warner.

“She will soon win yours; of that I am certain. By the way, when she came in, she was a little shaken. She did not know, till I showed her the Hall, that Lord Delancy had a place here; and it seems that she knew him, or some of his family—I think his sister-in-law, Lady Cardonnel—in happier days. She was half-inclined to go back again. The only weakness that I have detected in her, is a shrinking from the recognition of old acquaintances. You know she was an officer’s daughter, and lost her father and her only brother within six months of each other. I told her the family was absent, and you must contrive before their return to make her feel that she belongs to you.”

“We shall try,” said Mrs. Warner.

“And she must take us, young and old, under her wing ; for I suspect that the mamma and grandmamma are more taken aback by this great change than the heiress herself. But this young lady, who seems so simple and gentle, with all her elegance, will put us in the way.”

Before the end of the evening, Mr. Langhton had the satisfaction to find Katy’s shyness disappear, and to see her seated on her old footstool, at the feet of her new friend.

“Do not call me Miss Warner, pray,” said she ; “I do not know myself by that name. Call me Katy.”

“Must I call you Katy ?” was the reply. “And suppose I were to make a condition, and ask you to call me Honor ?”

“Honor !” exclaimed Mrs. Bell.

“Honora is the real name—not uncommon in Ireland, where my mother was born. But Honor has been my pet name,—my

home name ; and it is to the home name that the heart answers."

"We used to christen children after the virtues," said the old lady ; and it was a good practice to remind them of their duties."

"Ay," said Mr. Langhton, "such names abound in those fertile records of manners, the old comic writers, not always to edification. That very name of Honor, for instance, has been immortalized in Fielding's great novel. But the Puritans chiefly affected those appellations ; and from them the custom has prevailed amongst their American descendants. Faith, Hope, and Charity are common in New England, to say nothing of Prudence and Patience."

"We have a Patience in Atherton," observed Mrs. Bell ; "the greatest scold in the parish—Patience Pratt. People call her her Patty Pratt, and pretend that

her name is Martha; but Patience she was christened, though the name has done her little good enough, as her husband knows to his cost. If a woman is born to be a vixen, it does not signify what you call her."

"I shall hold by Honor, though," said Katy. "Honor is a noble name, mamma. I love it dearly."

And the poor governess felt that her pupil was already her friend.

The stone hall opened into the front passage, and another door, exactly opposite, led into an apartment of equal dimensions; which, cold, dreary, and formal-looking in its stiff and scanty plenishing, its faded carpet, covering only half the floor; its dark mahogany furniture; its small Pembroke tables; its chairs and settees, covered with white dimity, had yet in height, and size, and aspect, all that was required to convert the dismal

best parlour into the pleasant, cheerful, family room.

Honor discovered this capability before breakfast on the morning after her arrival; and discovered also another passage, at right angles with the first, which led by an old-fashioned glass door into the pretty court, half turf, half flower-bed, which swept round two sides of the house; parted from the kitchen-garden by a yew hedge, over which appeared rows of espaliers and groves of orchard trees, a very forest of pear, apple, cherry, plum, medlar, and walnut.

In the centre of the grass-plot, before the glass door, surrounded by a narrow border of mould, was an old sun-dial, beneath which still lingered some of Katy's beloved flowers. There knelt Katy herself, trying to compose a little bunch of such as yet remained, small spikes of mignonette and winter violets,

and singing in a fresh, round voice, a voice youthful and blooming as her cheeks, words new to Honor, but which would have enraptured the heart of Mrs. Glenham. It was an old Irish air, to which, with more feeling for the music than the metre, these irregular lines had been adapted :

“Good morrow ! good morrow ! soft, rosy, and bright,
Glow the clouds in the east, laughing heralds of light ;
Whilst still, as the glorious colours decay,
Full gushes of music seem tracking their way.

Hark ! hark !

Is it the sheep bell among the ling ?
Or the early milkmaid carolling ?

Hark ! hark !

Or is it the lark

As he bids the sun good-morrow ?”

On hearing Honor's step, the singer paused suddenly, and flew to present her little nosegay. They entered the house together ; and when, after breakfast, Mr. Laughton requested commissions for Lon-

don, and Honor had, by a delicate question, suggested to Mrs. Warner the new-furnishing the pleasant best parlour, to which Mr. Langhton added a proposal to convert the stone hall into a dining room; she said, to his surprise and pleasure:

“Be sure amongst the new purchases not to forget a piano.”

“Ah! you have relented in your own favour. I thought so.”

“I have relented for the general good. If you had been by the old sun-dial this morning—”

“Why, Katy? Stop, my queen!” for the little damsel showed symptoms of running away. “Are you the songstress? Nay, I must hear you.”

“I will accompany you,” said Honor, moving to fetch her guitar. And laughing, stopping, and beginning afresh, they got through the stanza.

“Is not there another verse?” enquired

Mr. Langhton, after due praise of the singer. "Where did you pick up the song?"

"Harry Glenham taught me," replied Katy, with the most open simplicity. "He wrote that stanza one day when we were talking of the lark flying upward every morning, as if to bid the sun good-morrow. He wrote that verse to some old air, and taught me to sing it; and he talked of finishing the song some day or other. He often does begin things, and talks of finishing them. Harry is idle. His brother says that all poets are so; that it belongs to their trade. He's very good-natured though," continued Katy, "and I like him."

If Mrs. Glenham had heard the tone in which these words were spoken, she would have despaired. It quite reassured the careful guardian, who had begun to think that singing Harry Glenham's songs

might put Arthur Delancy's interests in jeopardy.

This discovery of Katy's musical talent was no small comfort to her governess, who, new to teaching, had justly dreaded the invidious task of instructing one equally new to the process of being taught. Now the lesson assumed the pleasant form of amusement.

Herself an accomplished and enthusiastic musician, she had brought with her a goodly collection of vocal music, both printed and manuscript, and in talking over the books, and playing on the guitar such airs as her young pupil wished to hear, the hours glided by, easily to both parties, happily to one; to the other they were too full of association to be without pain.

Many languages found a place in this miscellaneous collection, French, Italian, German, Spanish, even Latin was there in

the shape of portions of the grand masses of the Church of Rome; and to Honor's great amazement, and a little to her amusement, Katy, whose ignorance of all modern tongues was so complete that she had not distinguished one language from the other, seized on a fine piece of Church music, and began picking out the words with a certain apprehension of the meaning, and a sonorous English pronunciation which would have horrified the Italian composer.

“You know Latin, Katy?”

“Only a very little,” said Katy, producing a well-thumbed Eton grammar. “Harry wanted to teach me; but I soon got tired, and mamma said it was boyish, and grandmamma looked ready to laugh, so I left off. The last time the boys were at home they read to me, which I like a great deal better than learning lessons, and what I like I recollect. When I don't care for a thing I forget it.”

Here was another lesson in education. Scott and Shakspeare were pleasant textbooks, and much history and geography were conveyed to the mind, in company with such thoughts and such creations as awakened every faculty in that fresh and healthful nature. Poetry, above all, she delighted in; and poetry, real poetry, besides the facts it leads to, is the finest form of truth. So, reading with her pupil, singing with her, walking with her, talking with her, loving her, passed Honora's days.

The graver and the sadder business of life held on its way. Christmas brought to Lord Delancy the threatened notice of foreclosure unless the mortgages were redeemed within six months. Separate notices were also sent to the several tenants on his various estates, to pay no more rent after that period to him or to his agents.

The commotion occasioned by a proceed-

ing so unexpected equalled that caused by Mr. Strange's will. It took a form of regret and affection honourable to all parties. The nobleman, so proud and even haughty with his equals, had been, as proud men often are, most affable and most accessible to his inferiors. Living much in the country and amongst his own people, he knew every farmer and every villager on his extensive property. If he loved his old trees, still better did he love the old faces. An excellent landlord, the farmers were sure of indulgence when it was needed, and of justice, rarest of virtues, always. The tradesman had custom; the labourer, employment; the sick, attendance; the children, instruction; the old, relief. When they met, after morning service, in the churchyard, there was a real and a hearty reciprocation of interest in the respectful bows and curtsies which greeted their good lord on every side, and

in the pleasant smiles and kindly words by which those rustic greetings were returned. To lose such a friend would be grief enough, but to lose him for Sir Vivian, the ungrateful kinsman, the treacherous usurper, whom the old tenants remembered and of whom all had heard, would be intolerable. The storm of indignation was universal. Nobody could believe that English law could tolerate such injustice. They thought the whole story a fabrication.

Gradually this incredulity assumed a more positive form. The absence of debt, the regularity of payment, the disbelief of the household, and the quiet manner with which, in accordance with Mr. Langhton's advice, the establishment at the Hall had been kept up, without increase or diminution, looked very unlike the proceedings of a ruined man. And the shrewd ones amongst them—Mrs. Glenham, for instance—who watched the words of the

family at the farm, Katy's anger, her mother's fury, Mrs. Warner's quiet smile, and Stephen Langhton's scornful shrug, might give a tolerable guess as to the manner in which the catastrophe would be averted. So Lord Delancy, on his return to Atherton, found little to remind him of his precarious tenure except an increase of reverence and devotion from all around him; perhaps, to a man of his sensitive temperament, the severest trial that he could encounter.

By Katy he was greeted with delight, although, to her exceeding disappointment—for, like other spoilt children, she expected all her pets to pet one another—he got no farther with Miss Clive than a ceremonious politeness, which she, shrinking from him as from other strangers, repaid with grave respect. Another subject of lamentation with poor Katy was that great English grievance, the weather. A

seasonable frost had set in, and she, longing to see Marigold run, was wishing for an open day as heartily as if she had been the whole Quorn Hunt. To comfort her, Lord Delancy resolved to turn the frost itself into an amusement, and to have a skating party upon Atherton mere. Lady Cardonnel and Major Delancy were expected on the morrow, and on the following day, Mrs. Warner, together with the other ladies, promised to attend. A close carriage was to convey her and Mrs. Bell. The young ladies were to walk.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ICE.

THERE are wintry days in England which have an indescribable beauty, and this was one. The pervading charm was the work of that great magician Hoar-frost. The morning had been misty, but towards noon the sun appeared, softened by a light haze, which gave a pearly tint to the cloudless blue sky, and accorded well with the perfect tranquillity of the landscape. Not a breath of air stirred; and in the perfect absence of wind, the degree of cold indicated by the thermometer was hardly felt.

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There was, however, no tendency to thaw. Rime was everywhere. The finest patch of moss on the irregular park-paling, the lichens that roughened the trunks of the great trees that overhung the road, had each its net-work of delicate tracery. The tawny leaves of the cut-leaved oak, which still hung quivering on the lower branches, were edged with its glittering fringe. The old rugged fir, the leafy beech, the tasselled birch, the bristly holly, the purple bramble, the crisp brown fern, the green grass of the park, all showed their own varied colours and varied forms through the same crystalline medium, contrasting with the rich hues of the holly-berries, the dark ivy-berry dear to the wood-pigeon, and the crimson haws, which the small birds love so well. In the stillness of that woodland scene, the rustle of a robin's wing, the dropping of a leaf from the bushes was distinctly audible.

Thanks to the companionship of Jacob Stokes, Katy knew every bird that visited the hill, or dwelt in the valley; the note, the habits, the nest, the eggs. It is even likely, that had some wicked enchanter imposed upon her the task of the poor princess in the fairy tale, who was commanded to select each bird's proper feathers from a heap that filled a room, she would have found the labour possible—a mere question of time—so extensive was her knowledge of those winged tribes, and so accurate her observation.

She pointed out to Honor that most beautiful of British birds, a gorgeous kingfisher, as he stooped to drink at a little rivulet—a tiny spring issuing from beneath the roots of a great beech, which went trickling along almost hidden by coat over coat of thin translucent ice, until it was lost in the winding stream, which, after traversing great part of the park, was

merged in its turn in the wide waters of the lake, now entirely frozen.

Katy's pockets were, as usual, filled with bread and biscuits, which she crumbled for her feathered clients; who, tamed by the severity of the season, were alternately attracted and repelled by their desire of sharing in her bounty, and their dread of Marigold, who, adorned in her new collar, and proud of it as a child of a necklace, gambolled round her young mistress playful and graceful as a fawn.

The frozen lake was a pretty sight, with its wooded islands, its mimic bays and promontories, the grand old forest trees between which it swept away into the distance, and the masses of evergreens, laurel, arbutus, cedar, cypress, or the light weeping-birch, or weeping-willow, of the foreground.

A beautiful sight always was Atherton mere, and on occasion of this wintry festival, it put forth signs of habitation such as

had not been seen there for many a long day.

On one of the points of land that jutted into the lake, hanging over the water, the lower part a boat-house, and above a rustic pavilion, stood an old grey fishing-house, half covered with ivy and creeping shrubs, backed by dark firs, and flanked on the farther side by two poplars of colossal growth and size, columns of vegetable beauty.

The smoke rose curling from the fishing house, prepared for good Mrs. Warner, in case of her feeling the cold too severe. She had, however, preferred a seat outside a tent in one of the sheltered bays; and as they approached, the young ladies saw at once that the travellers had arrived.

A large party of gentlemen were on the lower part of the lake, where a group of skaters and a number of country people had assembled. Lord Delancy with

his usual courtesy, having issued a general invitation to such of the neighbours as chose to join the sports upon the ice; the pavilion and marquee being filled with seats and refreshments for the gentry, and two or three tents in the background amply provided with ale and solid Christmas cheer for the villagers.

Katy, always shy, held back a little as they came near the lake. She dreaded a stranger. Honor insensibly drew her forward. Poor Honor! her veil was down; but the face was calmer than the heart. Mrs. Bell and an elegant woman of middle age advanced to meet them; and without suffering her mother to speak, Lady Cardonnel took Katy's hand.

"People talk of children growing out of knowledge," said she, "I have not seen those dimpled cheeks these six years, but I should have recognised them anywhere."

And bending graciously to the gover-

ness, she led the little heiress to a seat next her grandmother. Mrs. Warner, always considerate of the feelings of others, and therefore always well-bred, said :

“Will your ladyship permit me to present to you a very dear young friend of ours, whom I believe you to have seen abroad? Miss Clive, Lady Cardonnel.”

“Miss Clive! Honora! Honor Clive! It is incredible! it is impossible! I heard of you, I saw you with the Lynmeres.”

“And you find me in a far happier home,” said Honor. “By-and-by I will tell you the story. At present your ladyship must play the hostess.” And she joined Mrs. Glenham, who introduced her to the wife of a neighbouring clergyman, and talked as people do talk of the weather and the hoar frost, and the park, and the lake,—everything except that of which she was thinking.

At last Lady Cardonnel had disposed of her guests. Some walked into the pavilion; some more daring ventured on the ice. Mrs. Warner, wrapped in fur cloaks, remained in her old seat, talking over schools of industry with the good Rector, whose secret thoughts ever and anon wandered away to the Troades, and the matchless wailing of those Trojan women. Katy, escorted by Lord Delancy, and accompanied by her mother, tripped gaily on to join the skaters, occasionally tempted from her path by the less aristocratic amusement offered by a troop of sliders led by Jacob Stokes,—the very largest slide she had ever seen. Her mother held her tight lest the temptation might prove too strong for human weakness. And such perhaps it might have been, but for a counter-temptation held out by Lord Delancy, who not only promised her a lesson in skating, but had actually pro-

vided himself with a pair of such skates as are used by the country girls in Holland.

Lady Cardonnel had led her companion into a retired walk.

“Now then, Honor, why are you here? After that double loss, which all lamented, I heard of you with your aunt. I heard of you as on the point of marriage to Sir Philip Hervey.”

“And you believed that report?”

“No. And I can understand why, refusing such a match as Sir Philip, a residence with the Lynmers might become painful. But why not go to your uncle Rossborough? Why not come to me?”

“Dear Lady Cardonnel!”

“Why go out as a governess? Why come here?”

“Ah! that I fear was an error. To go as a governess was, I still believe, right and wise. The loss of that dear

father, that dear brother, who were everything to me, has left me destitute of means as well as withered in affection. Why should one absolutely penniless shrink from earning her bread by honest labour? And nowhere could I be more useful or more content than with these kind people. Here, however, I should not have come had I been aware of the chance of meeting any old acquaintance, even you, dear Lady Cardonnel. It seems strange to say, but I had never heard of Lord Delancy in connection with Atherton, nor of Atherton in connection with Lord Delancy, until I arrived at the gate of my new dwelling. If spoken of at all, it must have been as 'The Hall,' in contradistinction to 'The Castle.' The name of Delancy first met my ear as I was at the very door of my future residence. Then I endeavoured to prevail on Mr. Langhton to take me back again. I did not tell him all.

And since then I have tried to persuade Mrs. Warner to let me return to town, confessing frankly that I had received much kindness from you, and that my heart was not yet strong enough to meet one who had known me before I was an orphan."

"And they refused to part with you?"

"They would not hear of it. And after all, why should I go? What harm can result from my staying? Nobody knows better than you, that before Major Delancy's attentions to me had produced the natural effect of such attentions from such a man, I had become aware of my own position, and of his. Ah, dearest friend! how can I ever thank you enough for the frankness which saved me from causing the misery of such a son, and such a father! Causing and sharing! I knew that the small portion which I inherited from my mother was no longer mine, since

it was urgently needed by my poor brother and my dear father. I knew that Major Delaney was bound by every feeling of duty not to add to his family distress by marrying a portionless wife. I said, no, when he asked me—an absolute, unconditional, unexplained no. What man forgets, what man pardons such a refusal? And if from my previous conduct he had derived any encouragement, if he had guessed from look, or tone, or word, that his proposal would be only too pleasant to me, then a thousand times more will he resent that refusal, since he must attribute my previous manner to heartless coquetry. Since I have been here, I have gathered in a hundred ways from Mr. Langhton and these artless people, that the need of money at the Hall is more urgent than ever, and that a marriage is arranged between the young heiress and the heir. Look at her, and look at me. She is as

good as she is pretty, as charming as she is good. Besides, no man ever pardons such a refusal. He will but treat me as his father does, with cold civility. I will go to-night if you think it right. Be assured that I will do all I can to promote the match, for they are worthy of each other. But I know that no man ever pardons a refusal without an assigned cause, and I think that I shall promote it best by staying. Do what you will with me, dear Lady Cardonnel. I have told you all. Send me away at once if you see fit." And, paler than ever, Honor ceased. She had poured forth this confession of feeling with an emotion most unusual to her, and stood waiting the decision of her friend, who had listened to her with the deepest sympathy, when a sudden outburst from the lake of many voices—in which cries of distress from Katy, and calls between fright and scolding from Mrs. Bell, were

distinctly audible—put a sudden and unexpected stop to their dialogue.

They had purposely sought a retired footpath on the opposite side of the mere from that where the pavilion and the tents were situated, and which, although following the general outline of the water, was yet concealed from it partly by the irregularities of the ground, partly by clumps of cedars, and masses of arbutus and Portugal laurel, partly by brakes of hawthorn and holly, the natural growth of the soil.

If they had not been engrossed by the interest taken by both in the subject of their discourse, they might have discovered from the mingled hum of many voices, and the gay shouts of the country lads, that they were now nearly opposite that part of the lake which for thickness and smoothness had been selected by skaters, sliders, and spectators, as the principal scene of the morning's diversion.

Major Delancy, a splendid skater, after enjoying for a short space the exhilaration of an exercise in which he excelled, had with the utmost good humour left a party of the neighbouring gentlemen, who had crossed the downs for the purpose, and with whom he had been executing on the ice the different figures in which proficient delight, in order to give a lesson in the mystery of cutting initials and spread eagles on that glassy surface to Harry and Charles Glenham, and some other youths of their age, when he was summoned by his father to attend Katy and Mrs. Bell.

About the skating ground, as has been said, the ice was perfectly safe. But farther down the mere, the bank, overhung by a large weeping willow, jutted out abruptly, and, probably from a spring which fed the waters, the ice was so much thinner, that the spot had been staked out by tall sticks, surmounted by

little red flags in token of danger. The space that was perfectly safe was so extensive that there did not appear the slightest cause to apprehend that anybody would stray out of bounds.

Pets, however, are proverbially wilful. Marigold, after playing every conceivable prank around her mistress on dry ground—chasing the birds in the woodland, jumping after squirrels on the tree-tops, and trying to coax a dappled fawn into a game at romps—had followed her footsteps on the ice; and a little puzzled by the slippery smoothness, and daunted at the numbers assembled, had bounded forward until she reached the interdicted spot, the very point of danger, where the glassy surface, yielding even to her light weight, gave way more and more under her struggles; the ice sinking as the water rose, until at last the frightened favourite seemed to be totally immersed in the mere.

At this moment it was—whilst Katy was darting on to save her pet, and Mrs. Bell screaming to her to desist—that Lady Cardonnel and Honor found themselves on the edge of the lake, a little in advance of the mother and daughter, but still short of the scene of danger.

“Oh! Miss Clive, save my Katy!” shrieked Mrs. Bell. And Honor, first making a sign to Jacob Stokes, who was as usual close to his young mistress, bounded on the ice, and favoured by their mutual position, was able to seize her young pupil round the waist; thus checking her first impulse, and gaining time to exert the influence which she, and she only, possessed over that adventurous damsel, and to lead her gently towards her mother.

“Look, dearest; the danger is in the numbers who are hurrying to rescue your pretty darling. See! Harry is on firm

ice, and he has got hold of her now. Yes ! he has hold of her collar ; and Charles, with his arms round his brother's waist, is steadying Harry."

A rush of people came between, and the girls lost sight of the scene of danger. But a terrible cry announced that the ice had given way under one at least of the eager boys. Deadly peril was in every glimpse they caught, and in every sound they heard. Their senses reeled with the suspense and the fear, which seemed prolonging moments into hours.

Another rush gave them a view of Major Delancy on the bank, throwing, with all the power of his tall and vigorous frame, a long ladder across the space between the sound ice and the shore. In an instant he had drawn one brother from the dangerous pool, had lent a helping-hand to the other ; and then, clinging to the long shoots of the willow, and making himself a desperate

plunge, he reappeared, bearing the unlucky cause of this commotion, the dripping, trembling Marigold, under his arm.

The whole scene passed in a shorter time than has been given to the narration.

“It was the ladder did it all, dear Dr. Glenham!” said he, as the agitated father vainly sought to thank him for saving one if not both his boys. “The ladder saved them, under Providence, not I; and the person who in the midst of this confusion directed me to this same ladder, and would have flung it himself if he had been strong enough, was this good little boy.”

Jacob Stokes, not in general addicted to shyness, stole away from the good Doctor’s gifts and praises, as if he had been caught in some misdeed, muttering as he turned over his money—for the Rector had emptied his purse into his hand—“that it was Miss who showed him the ladder, and he had no business to be thanked for her

doings, nor to take the guineas and half-crowns."

"My young friends will be the better for a glass of brandy, sir," said Major Delancy to his father; "and so will Dr. Glenham. I am an old campaigner, and know the virtues of cognac. In the meantime, I must take Marigold to Miss Warner."

"She would have been in the water, too," exclaimed Mrs. Bell, "if it had not been for her good governess, God bless her!"

And thus, after three years' absence, did Arthur Delancy meet Honor Clive. "Her governess!" He had almost dropt the shivering creature that he held. But Honor had augured justly. The pride of a refused man came to his assistance. He bowed slightly but respectfully, and recommended transporting the dripping grey hound to the fishing house, where she could be dried before the fire.

Honor, to whom Katy still clung, was at last able to escape to Mrs. Warner and Mrs. Glenham, each of whom had caught the sound of a vague alarm, a rumour of unexplained peril, and both were greatly solaced by receiving a clear and truthful account of the adventure. There was nothing now amiss except two wet jackets, which had better be changed.

Mrs. Glenham, eager to see her boys, and Mrs. Warner, desirous not to lose sight of her heedless granddaughter, were encountered at the entrance of the tent by the good Rector and Jacob, anxious to restore to the right owner the praises bestowed upon himself for discovering the ladder.

“’Twas Miss, there,” quoth the boy; “she made a sign to me, and I told the Major.”

Jacob lost nothing with any party by his honesty; and Mrs. Warner, now for

the first time hearing from the Doctor Honor's share in holding back Katy, said emphatically—

“I believe, my dear, that there is no good deed in which you have not a part.”

If Honor had before doubted as to her line of conduct, this confidence would have decided her.

Nearly at the same moment, a still stronger revulsion took place in another young heart. Harry Glenham had been told by his father the suspicion which he himself entertained of Lord Delancy's desire to gain the hand of the heiress for his heir. He had been reminded that he was indebted to his kind patron not merely for a valuable living, but for a key of his magnificent library, the privilege perhaps dearest to him of any on earth; and for the thousand daily attentions and kindnesses which sweeten life between country neighbours. The father's appeal had been

felt by the high-spirited boy, but felt as we all feel words. What had happened that morning was a living act. As he thanked Major Delaney for the life which he owed to his bold heart and vigorous arm, and as the young soldier pressed his hand and declared that the joy was his, he inwardly vowed to go back to Cambridge, bury himself in his studies, and never suffer a thought of his pretty play-fellow to cross his fancy again.

Is it needful to say that the mother's heart made the same renunciation?

CHAPTER X.

MUSIC BOOKS.

THE arrival of Lady Cardonnel tended much to facilitate the intercourse between the Hall and the Farm. The perfect breeding of the court lady, and the simplicity of Mrs. Warner, had so much in common, and, in either case, there was so great a fund of goodness and sincerity, that mutual respect and esteem grew up between them.

Lady Cardonnel, poor Lady Delancy's favourite sister, was a widow, whose children—the daughters married, and the sons

in the naval, military, and diplomatic service of their country—were literally scattered all over the face of the earth, so that her brother-in-law's house was more her home than any other abode, and his interests as much her own as if they had been united by the ties of blood. She had spent the three years of the occupation of France with her youngest daughter, the wife of an officer in Arthur's regiment, and there she had become sincerely attached to her high-minded nephew, and hardly less so to Honor Clive; and it was because she loved both so well, that she joined Stephen Langhton in his endeavours to bring about the union with Katy, foreseeing nothing but misery on either side, in the renewal of an affection which would bring ruin to his worldly prospects, and break his father's heart. Her advice to her young friend had been to remain at Atherton, the rather that Major Delaney's manner to her

was as cold as was consistent with gentlemanly courtesy. If not indifference, it was a resentment so chilling and so persevering as to answer the same purpose.

The good lawyer also was frequently at the Hall, and upon these occasions the two families were brought into still closer connexion. Sometimes they walked together; sometimes they drove, and then good Mrs. Warner was seduced into joining the party: still more frequently the younger ladies rode on horseback. Major Delancy had redeemed Mrs. Bell's promise, by causing a beautiful mare to be trained under his own inspection for her daughter's use. His groom had been seen, equipped with riding-skirt and side-saddle, cantering across the park at so wild a rate, that Jacob Stokes, not suspecting the disguise, paid his young mistress the equivocal compliment of declaring that it could be nobody but Miss Katy. The creature had

become so great a favourite, that the "Faëry Queen" had been ransacked to find a name to match her grace and symmetry; and as if conscious of the affection lavished upon her, Britomarte seemed never so happy as when cantering with her fair rider over the downs every day and all day long.

Of course the gentlemen attended at these morning rides, and very often the party at the Farm were invited to an unceremonious dinner. In return, the small family at the Hall would drink tea with their humbler neighbours. No influence short of Honor's could have restrained Mrs. Bell's desire to extend to them a far larger portion of hospitality. One day she beheld her turning over the leaves of an ancient-looking cookery book, meditating eggs and bacon in blanchmange, and a floating island in whipt cream, besides a dozen other rustic luxuries culled from a family collection of choice recipes, and the

slaughter of a hecatomb of poultry, from Katy's pigeons up to the last turkey of the season. Lucky birds! that talk between Miss Clive and Mrs. Bell saved their lives.

It was now, to date as Katy did by flowers, about the time when snowdrops, hepaticas, crocuses, and the winter-acornite, were circling round the old sun-dial in the garden, primroses covering the sunny banks, violets perfuming the hedgerows, and daffodils crowding round the orchard trees; and the usual party were assembled in the pleasant parlour at the Farm, fragrant with the violets which she had stolen from the park, when Mr. Langhton addressed Katy with a question which seemed innocent enough, but which would have startled a more experienced young lady, as the forerunner of a very unwelcome request.

“Pray, my queen, did you ever get the

remainder of the ‘Good-morrow’ song from your Atherton poet?—the idle member of an idle fraternity, as his brother Charles very justly called him.”

Katy stood up womanfully for her poor friend; and Arthur, who had taken a fancy to the lad from the moment he had pulled him out of the water, as indeed he had done by Marigold (a generous spirit does love those whom it has served), made common cause in his defence.

Lord Delancy, pleased with everything that tended to bring into closer familiarity the couple whom he so ardently wished to unite, joined in the conversation caused by Mr. Langhton’s question, and expressed a desire to hear the song.

“No,” replied Katy, “the song was never finished.” And then she repeated the stanza.

“Sing it,” said her guardian.

But Katy blushed and laughed, and looked “No,” although she did not speak it;

she looked, too, as if determined, for once in her life, to be obstinate.

“Sing it, and Miss Clive will accompany you,” said her grandmother, as Honor took her seat at the instrument.

“Sing it, and Miss Clive will help you,” said Mrs. Bell. “Sing it, or we shan’t love you.”

“Won’t you!” said Katy’s loving, saucy glance, as plainly as ever eye spoke yet.

“Sing it, my Katy, if you love me,” whispered Honor.

Katy, unable to resist that adjuration, began; but before she got through the “Good-morrow,” stopped suddenly. Honor, accustomed to her fits of fright, continued the accompaniment for a few bars, and then said to Mr. Langhton—

“That burthen seems to have taken hold of Mr. Henry’s imagination; for on inquiring of Mrs. Glenham if she could furnish us with the remainder of the ‘Good-morrow’ song, she produced another, which I

have copied into this book. Suppose we try that, Katy? I think Mr. Langhton will like the air." And not giving her time to become frightened, she launched her dexterously into the song.

Give thee good-morrow, busy bee!
No cloud is in the sky,
The ring-dove skims across the lea,
The matin lark soars high;
Gay sunbeams kiss the dewy flower,
Light breezes stir the tree,
And sweet is thine own woodbine bower,—
Good-morrow, busy bee!

Give thee good-even, busy bee!
The summer day is by,
Now droning beetles haunt the lea,
And shrieking plovers cry.
The light hath paled on leaf and flower,
The night-wind chills the tree,
And thou, well-laden, leav'st thy bower,—
Good-even, busy bee!

The Hall party, to whom Katy's singing was a surprise, were enraptured with the

young, fresh voice, and the perfect articulation.

“Is it not as if we were transported to Isaac Walton’s times, and were sitting in the meadows by the river Lea, listening to one of the milkmaids?” inquired the old lawyer of Lord Delancy.

Like a commentary upon the observation, Honor began playing the symphony of Haydn’s beautiful canzonet “My mother bids me bind my hair,” which, although not called so, is as fully a pastoral as Isaac Walton’s book.

“Can you sing any duets, Miss Warner? I am sure you can. Arthur, come here and sing with Miss Warner.”

Arthur had been sitting in the darkest corner of the room, his elbow on a table, and his head leaning on his hand, as if absorbed by the music.

Honor opened another book at the “Canzonets of Jackson of Exeter,” and

placed "Love, in thine eyes" open before her.

Again Lord Delancy summoned his son; and this time he obeyed, going through his task with the skill and taste of a perfect musician. Katy was again slightly nervous; but Honor, to use Mrs. Bell's phrase, "helped her," supplying a momentary deficiency and concealing a little flaw, much as a professed singing mistress might have done, if ever singing mistress had had so true an interest in her pupil.

Lady Cardonnel, also summoned to help in "O Nannie," and other charming part songs, leaned over Honor and whispered:

"Will not you sing?"

"I have never sung, except, as now, a few notes to aid, or an entire air by way of lesson, since I lost him with whom we used to sing at Valenciennes."

"Ay," said Lady Cardonnel, "this is the old book;" and hanging over Colonel

Delancy's shoulder, she turned over the leaves and read the titles, "Time has not thinned;" "Take, oh take those lips away;" "Do not unbind two gentle hearts;" whilst another voice murmured "Poor Lionel!"

Many weeks had not passed before Katy added some of Mozart's finest duets to her stock: "La ci darem," "Ah perdona," "Ah guarda sorella," and "Ti veggo," from Winter's "Rape of Proserpine." It is doubtful whether the delightful expression of her English songs, admirable in articulation and feeling, or the imperfection of her fresh-caught Italian, were most attractive. But a deeper charm than either was to be found in the sympathy for her friend with which she avoided speaking on any subject connected with former performances of this music. She had heard from Lady Cardonnel that Captain Clive, the brother whom Honor loved

so well, had been accustomed to sing with her. She recognised the sort of family likeness which often distinguishes handwriting in some manuscript German songs. Other MSS. there were also. But Katy had learnt to read the sensibility under the self-command of her governess's character, and avoided all trying subjects with the tact which is born of the heart.

CHAPTER XI.

SKETCH BOOKS.

“LET us take another turn under the lime-trees,” said Katy to her governess one Sunday afternoon returning from church, when they had reached the end of the fine avenue where the sunbeams played through the half opening leaves, casting a chequered light on the broad gravel road ; for by this time cowslips and fritillaries threw their bright colours on the grass. “Do not let us go in just yet. Mamma will take grandmamma home, and we will follow after one more turn.”

Mrs. Warner had been leaning on Honor's arm, and Katy was following side by side with her mother when she made this proposal.

"With all my heart," said Mrs. Bell; "I cannot have a worse companion than you, Katy, for you have not spoken a word. What have you been thinking about?"

"Nothing, mamma," responded the little beauty, as the four ladies parted, according to her arrangement: "Nothing at all."

Now this answer, which is in the very spirit of young ladyism, the answer which every girl of sixteen returns by instinct to that question when conscious that she has been thinking of any object a little too much, was entirely out of Katy's way; that fair damsel being one who, partly from the indulgence of those about her, partly from natural frankness, had never

known the weight of a secret in her life. Accordingly, those two simple words, "Nothing, mamma," made a strong impression upon one at least of her hearers.

Honor, however, knew that in these cases the best way to get at the truth is not always to ask for it. So she waited; and after they had walked a short distance arm in arm, a sudden question offered some hint as to the subject of her pupil's meditations.

"Do you think Major Delancy handsome?" said she.

The answer was such as to encourage a farther confidence.

"Certainly. I believe that every one thinks him so."

"I never did till to-day," resumed Katy, with her old frankness. "Though, to be sure, I have always been too much afraid of him to stare him in the face. But this afternoon as he sat in the corner

of that great chancel pew, with his head thrown back, and his eyes cast down, the light as it streamed through the tall window falling right upon his temple, and the curls pushed away from his high forehead, I thought that he looked very noble; calm and kind as a soldier ought to look."

"As a soldier ought to be," observed Honor, "and as I believe he is. Nothing can be higher than his character in the regiment. He is beloved by officers and men."

"Don't you think," continued Katy, "that he is like one of the heads in your Vasari, those grand old heads of the sculptors and painters, which are to a certain extent alike?"

"Perhaps so. We will look them over when we get home."

"Though, why they should be like a soldier—"

“Except,” interrupted Honor, “that they were soldiers of a nobler army—art that creates, not war that destroys. And I that say this am a soldier’s daughter,” added she, smiling; “but it is the truth, or that which I believe to be so.”

Just then the object of their praise, his father, and Lady Cardonnel were seen coming up the avenue, with Dr. and Mrs. Glenham, for whom they had waited. Katy’s shyness returned at the sight, and but for Honor’s better judgment, she would certainly have run away home. On meeting the party, Lord Delaney took immediate possession of the young heiress, and offering her his arm, insisted on her accompanying them to the Hall.

“We are old-fashioned people,” said he, “and dine at luncheon time on Sundays; and Dr. and Mrs. Glenham have had the goodness to return with us to coffee. I am to show her some fine German and Italian

prints. They are mostly on Scripture subjects, and would please Mrs. Warner. "Don't you think that if Arthur should drive the pony-chaise to the farm, he might prevail on her and Mrs. Bell to join us? At all events, I shall detain you as a hostage."

And overcoming her feeble show of opposition, he conducted her to the mansion.

Major Delaney speedily returned from his expedition, only half successful. The good grandmamma was fatigued; but Mrs. Bell, never more completely at ease than with the young soldier, who struck such awe into her daughter, entered the drawing-room in the highest spirits.

"I tell you, Major, that men are all alike," exclaimed she, finishing a dispute which had lasted the whole way. "I have had two husbands, and am a woman of experience; and I maintain that grave

or gay, rough or smooth, talkative or silent, they have all the same fault, they will have their own way. There was my first husband, Katy's father, who was so gentle and so quiet, I did not think he could have spoken two words at a time. Well! he had a way of his own, I promise you. And then there was my second spouse, such a giddy whirligig, that I did not believe he would ever stay long enough in a place to make up his mind to anything. Well! he too had a way of his own, and he would have it. Men are all alike, young ladies,—all alike, the very best of them."

"Poor Mrs. Bell!" said Lord Delancy.

"Poor papa!" cried Katy.

After coffee they repaired to the print room, where a splendid collection of the finest and rarest engravings in the world, were ranged upon double desks, round the spacious apartment. Mr. Dillon has since shown what money and taste can do

when they meet in an English merchant. What an art it is that diffuses beauty as well as thought, giving to these representatives of great pictures a home in every land, and a chance of duration infinitely multiplied! That colourless and silent poetry, how it appeals to the heart!—the great painters with their fiery etchings! and they who, slow and patient masters of their own high art, almost equalled on the copper the masterpiece they copied!

Lord Delancy, chiefly devoting himself to Mrs. Glenham, left the other ladies to the care of his son; for the dear Doctor had fallen upon Flaxman's Homer, and had forgotten that any woman had been born since the Siege of Troy.

Lady Cardonnel took charge of her younger visitors, ministering with almost equal delight to the cultivated taste of one fair companion, and the uncultivated intelligence of the other, full of the

eager questions which it is so pleasant to answer.

Major Delancy, for his share, undertook to amuse Mrs. Bell, who, it is sad to say, yawned over the fine Marc-Antonios, the huge Rembrandts, and the tiny Waterloos, and set all the efforts of her cavalier at nought, until he bethought him of a certain English magician, called Hogarth, powerful in cases of ennui, and brought forward a complete set of the great humourist, valuable for every sort of quality, rarity, condition, and former possessors (for many of these single impressions had a pedigree), as well as for the satire and the invention which have made the painter immortal.

Mrs. Bell was charmed. She had the English feeling of character, and that happened to her which has befallen many another gazer at those prints. She knew the baker's boy, whose tray is upset, and

had been well acquainted with the old maid going to church on a frosty morning.

Mrs. Bell went on merrily giving names to Hogarth's figures, until the costume or the attitude of the principal character in "Strolling Players dressing in a barn," awakened another English feeling, called decorum.

"Fie, fie, Major!" exclaimed the irate dame, "look at the shameless hussy tying up her garter before everybody: fie, fie!"

"Dear Mrs. Bell, it's only to show the hole in her stocking," observed the Major, in a deprecating tone. "Poor wretches, it's just to set forth the mixture of finery and penury. Look at the tin crown, and——"

"I'll look at nothing," declared Mrs. Bell, shutting the portfolio with a slam of virtuous indignation. "Suppose Katy should come."

Roused by the slam of the portfolio, which resounded through the room, and

by the clamour of her mother's voice, Katy did arrive, followed with more or less dispatch by the entire company. The Major had contrived to suppress all symptoms of a smile round his mouth, but there was a glimmer of laughter in his eyes which showed that the outcry had not proceeded from any very serious cause. He left Mrs. Bell to tell her own story; and instead of returning to the grievance, which would probably have ended in the production of the delinquent figure, she reminded Lord Delancy that he had promised Katy a sight of the Major's sketch-books.

Katy enforced the demand.

"I had not forgotten my promise," said Lord Delancy. "I made my son bring them to me only yesterday. They are in the library now." And sending a servant for four or five volumes of clasped books, he laid them before Lady Cardonnel.

Two or three volumes of very beautiful landscape drawings, chiefly of lake and mountain scenery, with here the ruin of a temple, there of an aqueduct; here an Italian villa, there a Roman bridge: such scenes as may be found in the *Liber Veritatis*, the magazine in which Claude secured those treasures of grace and beauty which he afterwards transferred to his grand compositions. Two or three volumes of this character were readily displayed, with no further deprecation than that of an amateur who knows perfectly the limits of his power.

“They are merely reminiscences of scenery,” said he, “done for my own gratification; as part, indeed, of a military and travelling diary; and without any pretension to artistic merit.”

Under one or two the names of the places were written, and Katy exclaimed as, in soliloquy:

“That’s the same handwriting with the Spanish songs in Honor’s music-book.”

Major Delaney was relating to Mrs. Bell some anecdote connected with the scene, and did not hear her observation.

Having gone through all but one of the sketch-books, he was about to put aside that which remained, unexamined, when the clasp unclosed, and Katy broke into raptures at the sight of the fine old Flemish town which it exhibited.

“This is worth all the rest,” cried she. “Look at those curious tall houses, with the narrow-peaked gables, which seem set sideways to the street; the strange doorways, the pretty windows, the twisted chimneys, the odd figures on the spouts, the stone galleries here and there, the carved balconies everywhere;—only look! Then the spirit and the truth; the people on the causeway; we can see them! The sunshine and the shadow; they are really

to be felt. Look, Honor: this is worth all the rest."

But Honor had drawn back her chair.

"Lady Cardonnel," said Arthur, in a low voice, "shut that book. It never ought to have been opened."

"Not on my account, Lady Cardonnel," said Honor. "Shew Katy the old Belgian towns. The first sight of those drawings reminded me of the days when they were taken—days when I was rich in a dear father and a dear brother. But what is our whole life if not a memory of past happiness? And should not the gifts and virtues of those loved and lost be cherished as a blessing, not turned from as a curse? Show Katy the towns."

She passed through an open French window, and sate in the shadow of the colonnade, looking over the park.

"Major Delaney knew Miss Clive, then?" whispered Katy.

“Yes; she was with her father and brother when they were quartered at Valenciennes, where Arthur’s regiment was also stationed. It was there that I made her acquaintance. Captain Clive and my nephew were most intimate, as you may guess from their having made sketching excursions together, and often worked upon the same drawing.”

“Poor Honor,” sighed Katy.

“Yes, she loved her brother dearly; he was indeed a most gifted creature. She has since lost both him and her father.”

“Dear Honor!”

“Lady Cardonnel then directed her companion’s attention to some highly graphic representations of Flemish and German towns: Ghent, Antwerp, Bruges, Nuremburg, in which the spirited and brilliant pencilling caught the young girl’s fancy more than the poetical feeling displayed by the owner of the book in

lake and mountain scenery, 'where the treatment of atmospheric effects, the clouds, the waterfalls, the distant hills, was often masterly.

At last, in a sketch by Major Delaney of one of the Moorish cities of Spain, Seville or Granada, a loose card, wrapped in silver paper, provoked Katy's curiosity. It was a profile of a young English officer, the pure outline of whose features was too familiar to her to be mistaken. The initials L. C. were written underneath.

"Lionel Clive," exclaimed Lady Cardonnel a moment after.

"How like Honor!" burst from the two; for Mrs. Bell had long forsaken the books she had demanded, and was sitting in peaceful slumber on a distant sofa; and from the moment that Lionel's drawings had been exhibited, Arthur had held aloof.

As they were replacing the card, they saw another profile, slightly touched on the reverse, a female head, with the hair braided as in the Greek statues.

“Honor herself!” cried Katy. “I wonder if she knows it.”

Meanwhile, the peaceful hour and the peaceful scene aided in restoring the poor governess to tranquillity. The rich perfume of plants from the conservatories blended with the thousand natural sweetnesses of spring in the woods. Nightingales answered each other from brake to thicket, and mixed with the soothing fall of a fountain, whose jets were silvered by the moonbeams. Light and shadow seemed softened in the park. All was harmony, till a stern voice spoke at the window, apparently in answer to some kind remark of Lady Cardonnel.

“Do not tell me of tears, Margaret!

They are oftener shed for the living than the dead."

This was a defiance to good or to evil, and so it was felt by Honora. This time no tears fell.

CHAPTER XII.

A YOUNG LADY'S BOOK-SHELVES.

THREE or four days after this scene, Mr. Langhton presented himself at an early hour in Major Delaney's dressing-room. He had arrived by a night coach at the nearest town, and had driven to the Hall in all haste.

"Arthur," said he, dismissing the valet, "this affair must be brought at once to a conclusion. I have not thought fit to speak on the subject to your father, because I know as well as you the danger to his health of all transitions of hope and

fear. But I tell you plainly that dangers are looming in the distance. The adverse solicitors throw out hints, which of course we are not the last to hear. Sir Vivian, I know, is hanging about this neighbourhood, hatching mischief, according to his nature. Think, if your father should catch sight of him before this marriage is finally arranged, what might be the consequence. I, as you know, do not hold myself justified, as executor or as guardian, to advance so immense a sum until at least the settlements are signed. In short, the formal proposal must be made at once. I do not see any danger of refusal. The mother and grandmother are strongly with you; and the young lady certainly likes no man better, unless it be your father. Follow her in her afternoon walk, and find or make an opportunity. I shall back to my proper work of drawing deeds; and a snap of the fingers," continued he,

suiting the action to the word, "for Sir Vivian and his devilries!"

So departing, without leaving time for reply, the good lawyer drove briskly to the Farm.

Thither, a few hours after, we follow him.

Now dearest Mrs. Bell, whose genial and hearty character had borne so well the broad sunshine of prosperity, rejoicing in Katy's good fortune, and trying to make all around her as happy as herself—that dear and excellent Mrs. Bell had her little foibles, as all women ought to have. It is only Queen Elizabeth who, in the plenitude of her royal grandeur and her unroyal vanity, desired to be painted without shadow. Our Mrs. Bell was no Queen Elizabeth; and the shade that threw into relief the broad lights of her honest countenance, was the least spice, the smallest spice in the world, of mistrust of her neighbours. She did not hate

them ; she did not speak ill of them ; but she was a little addicted to suspecting them of hating, and speaking ill of her : in short, she had always a Mrs. Grundy. At the commencement of our story, Mrs. Glenham had filled that ungracious part ; but matters having righted in that quarter, especially since the accident on the ice, the reigning Mrs. Grundy was no other than her old gossip and crony, Mrs. Thorpe, wife of the miller, whose bell-team had been eclipsed by the famous horses purchased by Katy's orders, who now drew Mrs. Bell's waggon to the next market town, as proudly as if it had been a dray of Barclay and Perkins, or the Lord Mayor's coach. It is just possible that the bell-team in question, whose paraphernalia had never been equalled in Atherton, might have inflicted certain pangs of jealousy on Mrs. Thorpe, and that the ill-will was not wholly on one

side—which, speaking from a pretty long experience, it may be assumed that ill-will seldom is.

Peace and harmony reigned in the pleasant morning room. Mrs. Warner, with her Bible before her, and her knitting on her lap; Mr. Langhton writing a letter, which, from his deep attention, seemed important; and Katy, at her own desire, attempting, under Honor's patient direction, a simple accompaniment to one of her own songs. All on a sudden, a storm entered from the village, in the person of Mrs. Bell, red-hot with anger.

“Well!” quoth she, “what will that woman say next?”

“What woman, dear Mrs. Bell?”

“What woman, mamma?” inquired the young ladies, almost simultaneously.

“Mrs. Thorpe!” was the reply. “She calls us all the bad names that ever were heard of—bad names out of the Bible!—wicked that she is!”

“Allowing to those horses of yours, Katy,” said Stephen, looking up from his letter.

“Now you’ve beaten her husband’s team so thoroughly, Mrs. Bell, you can afford to be generous, and let her jingle the bells.”

“She calls us bad names out of the Bible!” repeated the angry lady; “and says that I am as proud as Jezebel, and shall come to the same end. And she says bad things of you, Sir: she says, that not content with calling Katy a queen (and I’m sure you’ve called her so these dozen years) you are setting her up like one, and have got an Earl’s daughter for her governess. And then she talks nonsense out of a play-book, and tells of some old wicked wretch who set up his daughter in the same way, with a decayed gentlewoman for her serving-maid. To think of telling untruths of dear Miss Clive! She might say what she liked of me; but to speak falsehoods of her, and call her a serving-maid and an earl’s daughter!”

“Any one who spoke ill of Miss Clive must tell an untruth,” observed Mrs. Warner, perceiving that Mr. Langhton looked perplexed, and that Honor, with an expression between a blush and a smile, seemed hesitating what to say.

“Honor!” said Katy, flinging her arms round her friend’s neck, “Dear Honor! can this be true?”

“Not wholly true,” was the reply, “nor yet altogether false. I am not an Earl’s daughter, Katy. But would you love me less if my mother had been such? I never meant to deceive you, dearest Mrs. Warner. When Mr. Langhton enquired for a governess of my friend and school-fellow, Mrs. Osborne, she told him that I was in want of such a situation. My poor mother, dead long ago, had been the youngest of many children. My father, a younger brother of good family, was a colonel in the army. When he too died, I remained penniless.”

“Add,” broke in Stephen, “that she had given up her mother’s portion that her father might purchase a company for her brother, and pay certain unavoidable debts and losses.”

Honor pressed his hands.

“Lady Lucy Lynmere, my mother’s half-sister, took me to live with her ; but there I could not stay.”

“Because she refused a booby and a dolt,” again interrupted Mr. Langhton.

“And then I came here,” said Honor ; “where I have found dear friends and a happy home. Indeed I did not mean to deceive you, Mrs. Warner. Indeed, indeed, Mrs. Bell, I never dreamt of concealment. Katy, you will not love me less, my Katy, for this accident of birth ? I do not love you less for being rich.”

Mrs. Bell was on the point of giving vent to a whole volume of flourishing apologies about the tent-bed and the

painted wash-hand stand ; but a kiss from Honor drove away all her fine speeches ; and with a genuine exclamation :

“ We could not have loved you better if you had been a princess ! ” she flung herself upon her neck and wept aloud.

“ Nor could we have respected you more had we known all the noble things that Mr. Langhton has told us of you,” said Mrs. Warner.

“ Though how he came to know them,” began Honor.

“ Unless Mrs. Osborne told me,” interposed the lawyer, “ you cannot guess. But, indeed,” added he, “ I have myself the pleasure of some acquaintance with your rejected swain, an accomplished person, who, having a filly to enter for the Oaks, spelt her name of Psyche without the P. Some add that by way of making the rejected letter amends for the omission, he inserted it where it saw itself for the

first time in the word filly, which according to his reading stands so—Philly. But for my part, being of a charitable disposition, I, like Sir Benjamin Backbite when talking of Miss Letitia Piper's Twins, never believe more than half of these stories."

"I wonder," said Mrs. Warner, "how Mrs. Thorpe heard her news."

"Oh, the country!" said Stephen, "the country accounts for the spread of all news, false or true. As there are certain districts to which typhus seems indigenous, so gossip springs up spontaneously in the country, it is indeed its natural produce. This country of yours—this innocent country!" muttered the old lawyer, quoting, as he often did, a poignant figment of Horace Walpole: "'Questions grow there, and the Christian commodity, neighbours.' In London we don't know who lives next door. You may be dead

and buried and nobody know or care ;—a precious privilege. Now that we are talking of your grandmother, Honor, tell me if you have a portrait of her? and if it be here? Lady Rossborough was one of those traditionary beauties whose loveliness lives in the ears of men, like that of Cleopatra, or Mary Queen of Scots, or Lady Coventry.”

“Ah!” exclaimed Katy, “can it be that enchanting little print of a lady in a black hat and feathers, which Major Delancy was looking at the other night? the little engraving which lies between the leaves of one of the music books?”

“Where my poor brother placed it just before his fatal illness,” said Honor. “Yes.”

“I will show it to you,” said Katy. “Don’t disturb it, dear Mr. Langhton,” added she, in a low voice, “I think Honor does not wish it touched. I’ll hold it for mamma and grandmamma.”

"I have a miniature up-stairs which gives a better idea of her beauty," said Honor.

"It is hardly possible to go beyond this," said Mrs. Warner. This is sweetness itself."

Perhaps sweetness was the best word for that loveliest face. The rose almost emitted its fragrance. Charles Fox has described in his lines to Mrs. Crewe—an English beauty of whom the Irish countess was nearly the contemporary—that surpassing charm, of which the essence is character. The lines are not poetry, according to our present notion; but they have the merit of making us see the object described, instead of stopping to admire the description:—

"Where the sweetest expression to features is joined,
By Nature's most delicate pencil designed;
Where blushes unbidden, and smiles without art,
Speak the softness and feeling that dwell in the heart;
Where in manners enchanting no blemish we trace
But the soul keeps the promise we had from the face."

Such was the impression produced by Reynolds's pencil, and Bartolozzi's graver, in the portrait of the Countess of Rossborough.

Still Mr. Langhton wished to see the miniature. And the whole party, except Mrs. Warner, followed Honor to the small room over the door which Mrs. Bell had assigned to her as a study.

Katy flung her arms round her friend's waist, as they lightly ascended the stairs, and whispered :

"Did not Major Delancy know Captain Clive?"

"Yes," was the reply, "they were comrades and friends."

"And your father knew him?"

"Yes."

"And he knew you?"

"Yes, dear Katy. Here we shall find the miniature, Mr. Langhton. Yes, here it is."

“Ah! how lovely!” burst from all when they saw those features, with the full magic of colour, sparkling with smiles and blushes as in life.

“And here is her little prayer-book,” said Honor; “and a few letters to my poor mother.”

“Let me look at them,” interposed Mr. Langhton; “I take an interest in every thing belonging to a beauty.”

“They are as sweet as her countenance,” said Honor. “Ah, and here is some old point-lace, the lace of which we were talking the other evening.”

“Dear me!” ejaculated Mrs. Bell, giving vent as usual to the unsophisticated impression. “How ugly! and what a colour! I beg your pardon, though,” added she, upon reflection, “I dare say it’s all my fault, and that the lace is really very handsome.”

Honor smiled, as smile she needs must.

“Dearest Mrs. Bell, your truthfulness is worth all the fine-lady taste in the world. I am afraid that, except for the sake of those to whom it once belonged, I care for the point-lace as little as you do. There are my books,” added she, addressing the old gentleman, who was still busy with the letters of the lovely Countess. “You can look over those at your leisure.”

Mrs. Bell had presented Honor with an old fashioned, very black-looking, little book-case, which she called a *scrutoire*; a combination of desk and shelves, glass doors above, and three shallow drawers, with large brass handles, below. Originally this piece of furniture had decorated the best parlour; the shelves having been filled by a collection of stuffed birds of all nations, considerably the worse for wear. Cockatoos were there, and paroquets, and humming-birds no bigger than cock-

chafers, reliques bequeathed to some former generation by a long-deceased sailor-uncle; and ring-ouzels, white black-birds, and other curiosities of the same sort, stuffed by a traditionary aunt Martha, who had cultivated that singular female accomplishment.

Mrs. Bell had sighed over the dingy and moth-eaten remains, as she put them into a corner of the lumber room; whilst Katy and Jacob, learned as they were in such lore, had pored over them as Cuvier over a new set of fossil bones, guessing at name and species as a child at a riddle. An old warped mummy of a horned owl had completely posed them. They took the unlucky bird for a cat; and but for the beak which dropped off in the transit, for a cat it would have passed to this hour.

Katy had been the chief agent in installing the new tenants, the books; giving her assistance with the most willing

activity in unpacking, sorting, dusting, and arranging the several sets. She now pointed them out to Mr. Langhton, who, pocketing the Countess's packet, ran his fingers along the glass as he read the titles; accompanying the action by a half-muttered commentary, delivered rather as a soliloquy, than as a reply to Honor's apologetic.

“Very few, and rather miscellaneous than select!”

“Chaucer, Spencer, Shakespeare, Milton,—aye, the prose too; that's right!—Dryden, Pope, Cowley, poems and essays,—right there too! Bacon's Essays, Evelyn, Pepys, Walton's Lives, Lettres Spirituelles, Pascal, Holy Living and Dying, Foster's Essays—the girl's a good girl! Don Quixote—have you read that, my queen?”

“No, sir; and I wish so much to read it. Will you lend it to me, dear Honor?”

Honor's answer was to take out the volumes, write Katy's name in the first page, and give her the work with a tender kiss.

Mr. Langhton went on with his catalogue :

“ Gentle Shepherd, Howell's Letters, Gaudenzio di Lucca—curious old book that of Bishop Berkeley's ! she's getting into my line !—Burns ; aye, Currie's edition. Wonderful creature !—I saw him once. Eye like an hawk ! What are all these ? Old ballads ? Yes ; Percy, Scott, Ritson, Ellis, Thomas Warton, André Chenier—don't know him ! Lamb's Specimens ; good ! Ariosto, Alfieri, Molière, Madame de Sevigné, Defoe's Plague of London, Vasari, Crabbe, Cowper—my journey, to wit—Vicar of Wakefield, Franklin's Sophocles. Did not I see the Greek Antigone upon his table to-day ? De Grammont, Sully, Drinkwater's Gibraltar—

those would be her brother's books. Miscellaneous and imperfect as it is, this is the collection of a woman of a ripe mind, worth all the beauty in the world!"

Ever since the episode of Don Quixote, the good lawyer had been literally talking, or rather muttering to himself; Katy having drawn Honor away, that they might look together over the plates in her beautiful book, for it was that edition which contains the exquisite "Dorothea" of Stothard; so our friend turned from the old scrutoire, and walked down stairs, in that which is commonly called a brown study, and instead of despatching the letter which he had been writing, took himself off to London the same afternoon.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE COPPICE.

THAT afternoon was indeed most lovely. Small fleecy clouds went sailing over the bright blue sky, casting here and there a shadow over a landscape almost too bright in the full sunshine. The leaves—some, as the elm and the beech, just bursting from their brown sheaths; some, like the birch, waving in tenderest verdure; some, as the oak, sealed up in the dim buds—formed a variety enchanting to look upon. Even where the boughs were bare, they were alive with sap mounting into the highest

branches, transparent, glowing, full of purple light.

The orchard of the Farm was one flush of blossom, every fruit tree garlanded from the bottom to the top ; whilst over many a cottage, and at the edge of many a wood, some noble old pear or wild cherry tossed its white flowers in the sun. Up the downs, too, came rich glimpses of the golden furze blossom, thickets of heavy almond odour, left here and there to shelter the young lambs.

The park revelled in gorgeous beauty ; its noble mansion ; its masses of ever-greens, cypress, cedar, bay, and pine ; its bright waters, giving back the weeping-willow, the drooping birch, and the huge Spanish chesnut ; the long lines of American borders near the house already putting forth their gay colours ; the broad avenue of limes ; the spiral poplars ; and farther on, the grand old forest trees—oak,

beech, and elm, with their undergrowth of hawthorn, holly, and fern; that fern on which, under the tufted May garlands, does and fawns lay sleeping in the sun. The earth, too, was full of fragrance and of beauty. Everywhere the grass had the deep verdure of England, now powdered with daisies, now golden with buttercups, now enamelled with the purple bells of the wild hyacinth.

Through this scene of sylvan loveliness, Katy, with her faithful attendants, Jacob and Marigold, sallied forth to gather the first lilies for the Great Farm. Her guardian had reminded her that she had promised to fill his jar with that pure and graceful nosegay, composed of some score or two of delicate stalks, hung with their snowy bells, and backed-up with the broad silky leaf, of which the texture is as elegant as the hue. Honor should have helped to gather them; but Honor, although

she would never confess to being tired, often looked pale after one of their long walks; and this afternoon, without walking, she looked paler than ever. So Mrs. Warner prevailed upon her to stay at home.

Their way lay across a corner of the park, to a coppice which ascended in terraces to the high table-land which overhung the village. The coppice consisted almost wholly of hazel, with its fragrant tassels, interspersed with mountain-ash, now covered with its broad blossoms, and oaks of some eighty years' growth. The ground was literally carpeted with flowers, wood-sorrel, wood-anemone, wood-veitch, wood-roof, Solomon's-seal, columbine, wild strawberry, that strange and spectral flower, the wild Star of Bethlehem, cloud-berries and lilies, in beds of half an acre, scenting the air.

The path, a steep and winding ascent,

led from terrace to terrace, often undermined by fox's earths, holes filled up with dead leaves and living flowers, and looked upon nothing but the broad tree-tops. The solitude was unbroken. Numberless nightingales, as conscious of the silence, seemed answering each other in that exquisite variety of song so delicious when unprofaned by meaner notes.

The three companions had found in that pleasant place, and on that lovely May evening, a congenial occupation.

Jacob, plunged into one of the shallow pits spoken of above, was driving a long pole as far as it would go into a hole in the side, uncertain whether it did or not contain a litter of rabbits. "If that lazy jade Flora," thought Jacob, "would but have dragged her fat body this distance, her tongue would soon have told the truth of the matter. No rabbit could cheat her. Into the hole would she have rushed,

scratching and questing. We should have tracked her under the ground as old Sam Pownall tracks the moles. To be sure, the last time she got into a burrow she stuck fast, and we had to fetch a matter of six men to dig her out. It cost a good crown-piece in beer at the Delancy Arms, which angered Madam Bell. And Miss Katy got frightened for fear she should be smothered. So, may be 'tis better she's at home." And Jacob, a philosopher in his way, pursued his researches unassisted.

Marigold's diversion was of a different sort. She had discovered and made prize of a hedgehog, which, coiling itself into a ball, exercised a kind of passive resistance, which bade fair to defeat the manœuvres of its swift and powerful enemy. Marigold was puzzled. Now she gave it a poke with her pretty black nose, receiving so sharp a prick on that sensitive part that she tossed her slender head in the air in consternation,

ringing all the bells of her silver collar; then she gave a quick pat with one foot, then with the other, drawing both feet back as if they had encountered a red-hot coal. Then the aggrieved nose was cautiously inserted underneath the hedgehog, with a view to find out some more vulnerable place, and the hedgehog, thus impelled, rolled on a little; then Marigold jumped first to one side, then to the other, to put her adversary off his guard (for Marigold was a greyhound of high race, and therefore of high courage), and adventured, much to the damage of her nose, another poke. At last she lay down with her head upon her paws, watching her prey, just as a cat watches a mouse-hole. Woe to the hedgehog if, deceived by those half-closed eyes, he ventures to uncoil before Marigold leaves her post!

Katy, on her part, was making quick work with the beautiful lilies as they glim-

mered so gracefully between their broad green leaves; sometimes in large close beds, sometimes scattered here and there amongst the moss and the dead leaves, with a tuft of fern or of Solomon's seal, or a stalk of whortleberry intermixed. The lilies were in their earliest and loveliest stage, the lower bells fully out, the tops of the stems crowned with pale green buds, each larger and paler than the last.

There knelt Katy, filling her great basket; now listening to the nightingales, now singing snatches of her own sweet songs.

"Give thee good-morrow, busy bee!" was her greeting to one of those industrious insects, as he passed by heavily laden.

"Give thee good even! would be the better salutation," said she; "for I think we have both been long enough plundering the flowers, and may take ourselves home."

Accordingly she summoned her two attendants, when her basket was quite, and she herself almost, overset by a thousand curvets and gambols played off by Marigold, in honour of Major Delancy, who had climbed up one of the steep terraces as lightly as the four-footed favourite herself, and now stood by the side of the fair flower-gatherer.

“I have startled you, Miss Warner; and Marigold and I have scattered the lilies; but I will soon pick them up. And you must let me carry them. Yes, indeed you must, I am used to carry flowers. Happy they who have only known such burdens.”

“Yes,” said Katy, “you are thinking of the poor soldier, and doubtless his knapsack—”

“Aye,” interposed Arthur, “knapsack, and musket, and kettle, and kit, all that he has, and all that he has not, in

the roughest weather, and in an enemy's country. Those are among the sad realities of life. I am afraid that I was thinking of burthens less tangible, but fully as painful—Are you going home?" continued he, interrupting himself. "Shall we send Jacob back through the fields? That is the nearest way. And will you allow me to take his place as your attendant, and see you home through the park?"

Katy felt unusually shy; but she said "Yes," simply because she did not know how to say No; and for a little while they walked through the wood in silence, Arthur putting aside the branches and guiding her into the smoothest ways; and, at last, when they had come into something like a path, winding round the edge of the coppice, offering her his arm.

"I am walking too fast for you," he said. "You will be tired."

Katy had often felt—nobody could help

feeling—Arthur Delancy's peculiar sweetness of manner, his constant consideration for others, his care for their convenience, his deference to their feelings,—in a word the total absence of selfishness. It was high-breeding, the very highest breeding; but it was also somewhat more. This evening she felt more than ever this peculiar charm, and yet, instead of putting her at ease, it had exactly the contrary effect; so after saying:

“No, indeed, I am not tired; I am never tired; I could walk all day.”

She suddenly uttered that which so very few people, under any temptation, ever do utter—that is, the exact thought which arose in her mind, and exclaimed:

“Oh! how I wish that Honor were here!”

“Her companion half started, almost stopped. He commanded himself, however, and replied:

“I, for my part, rejoice in her absence. I wished to see you alone. You are young and inexperienced, Miss Warner; but you are also acute and observant; and I am sure that you must have observed, even if my father had not, as he has just informed me, endeavoured to prepare you for my proposal, that I was only waiting for some such opportunity to entreat you to accept my hand, and share my destiny.”

It was now Katy's turn to start and tremble. There are some things for which all the preparation in the world is of no avail; and a proposal of marriage—especially the first proposal—is one of them. Her colour went and came; and if Arthur had not found her a seat on the stool of a felled beech, she would probably so far have disgraced her country breeding as to have fainted.

He soothed her into composure; and throwing himself on the ground at her side, proceeded:

“ I trust this discomposure is not caused by aversion ?—No !—Surely you said no ! It is, then, but the modesty which blends so sweetly with your charming frankness ; and I may hope that our union, which would crown the wishes of all my family, and which is equally agreeable to your own, may be delayed no longer than the settlements due to so great an heiress, render necessary. You come to us, Miss Warner, bringing wealth which will redeem the forfeited estates of our old and honourable house—which will save the peace, the health, the very existence of my father ; and yet he feels—we all feel, I most of all—that that wealth fades into nothing when compared with the loveliness, the innocence, the goodness, of its owner. My father already loves you as a daughter. My whole life shall be devoted to the endeavour to render you happy. Will you not speak a word ?—not one word ?”

Poor Katy hung her head in silence, and even turned her blushing cheek aside.

“Will you not speak one single word? Well, then, your flowers shall be your interpreters. Give me one of the lilies in your basket, and that answer shall content me!”

Gathering herself up almost firmly, Katy at last found courage to speak:

“I love Lord Delancy dearly; and I know—no one better—all your goodness, Major Delancy;—Oh! far too good—far too clever for me! But I must ask one question. Honor—Were you never engaged to her?”

“Never! on the word of a gentleman!” replied Major Delancy, with an open firmness that it would have been impossible to disbelieve.

“It is very strange,” said Katy; “those Spanish songs in your handwriting, and your never speaking when you met.”

“Those songs are of my writing; so far is true, Katy; and here I might tell you what is also true, that I was the bosom friend of her only brother. But that would only be part of the truth; and it is due to you and to myself, to make one of those confessions most humbling to man’s weakness. Three years ago I did love, or I thought I loved, Honor Clive. I laid my very heart at her feet, and was rejected. Since then, we have never met, except in your presence. I do not ask, because I am sure that she has behaved with the admirable propriety which characterizes her every word and action, by keeping my offer secret.”

“She has never said one word,” replied Katy, much relieved.

“And this then has been the cause of your hesitation? The only cause? Is there no happier man?”

“No,” said Katy stoutly; “I have never

seen any young men, except Charles and Harry, and young Mr. Thorpe. And next to Mr. Langhton and dear Lord Delaney, I like you. But how can you think of me after Honor—dear, dear, Honor?”

It was a strange frankness, and puzzling to answer. He took her own tone, and told the truth.

“She would have nothing to say to me Katy. But you—will you not give me one of those lilies?”

And with her lilies in his button-hole, and her hand resting on his arm, the betrothed couple quitted the coppice.

After a little gentle talk he ventured to inquire, still very soothingly, for there was a nervousness about her, rare in that bright and vigorous spirit:

“Since not from any chance expression of Miss Clive, what could have given you the suspicion which had like to have cheated me of two flowers?”

“Oh! such a different person from Honor,” said Katy,—“a gipsy.”

“A gipsy, a fortune-teller?” enquired Arthur.

“Yes,” said she, “a gipsy fortune-teller. It is quite a history. Yesterday morning I was riding on the downs with Marigold and Jacob Stokes. We had had a good canter, for Jacob was on Honor’s pony; and were on the point of turning back when we came to the steep ridge that lies on the top of the narrow valley, called the Soak. You know the Soak? Quite full of alders, and willows, and cotton grass, where the stream oozes through, with great patches of gorse at the sides, looking like masses of gold in the sunshine. So sweet, too!—oh, so sweet! Grandmamma says she remembers an old shepherd, who built himself a hut amongst the gorse. I don’t wonder at it. I should like to live there myself. Vestiges of the garden are there still, a gooseberry-bush or

so, and an old apple-tree; and I suppose there must be some remains of the cabin, for as we stood looking down on the Soak we saw smoke sailing along the hill side, and two or three children searching for plover's eggs on the downs."

"And these were gipsy children?" asked Arthur.

"I suppose so," resumed Katy. "As we were looking at them, a tall woman appeared close to me, and caught hold of Britomarte's bridle. Now Britomarte has no fancy for tall women, in red cloaks, who seize her by the bridle, and she soon shook herself free. But she is the gentlest creature in the world when once her fright is over, so after a little prancing she became quiet. And then the gipsy insisted upon telling my fortune. I had never had my fortune told, and had no objection; only I had no money, and the gipsy declared that it was essential that her hand

should be crossed with a piece of silver. Luckily Jacob, who is the handiest boy in the world, and always has a knife, or a bit of string, or a hooked stick in his pocket—in short, whatever one happens to want,—luckily Jacob had sixpence, and that, and the promise of sending him with half-a-crown to-day, contented her. So then—” Here Katy came to a full stop.

“What then, dear Katy? Pray go on,” said Arthur.

“Well, then she took my hand, and said there was a cross in the line of life; that in a very few days—”

“Go on, I entreat.”

“Some one should say he loved me; but that he should really love not me, but my dearest friend.”

“Did she say more?”

“No. She was gone as suddenly as she appeared; and to-day, when Jacob rode to take her the half-crown, she and the children had disappeared.”

“That is strange, indeed,” observed the Major; “strangest, perhaps, of all. And you—”

“I told the whole story to dear grand-mamma; and she advised me—to do—as I have done, in short,” said poor Katy. “Was I wrong?”

“Never wrong,” replied Arthur, very warmly, “to follow in all things the dictates of one whose simplicity is the truest wisdom! Never wrong to tell all that is in your own pure heart! That woman must have been an emissary of Sir Vivian. Here is my father. We will not mention her to him.”

Lord Delancy’s ecstacy in welcoming his future daughter-in-law was delightful to his son. “God grant that I may make her happy!” was his inward prayer.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE ROMAN STATION.

THE intended marriage, although known by everybody, still passed as officially unannounced. The ceremony was to be performed with the strictest privacy, none but the two families being present, and the young couple departing at once for a year's absence on the Continent. A highly recommended maid, accustomed to foreign travel, had been engaged by Mrs. Osborne, and was now at Atherton. Honor's advice to Mrs. Warner had been that she only

should accompany the fair bride. She knew Arthur well, and felt how tenderly he would be drawn towards the sweet creature, who would depend upon him for her slightest action, her hourly amusement, almost her daily speech. She knew the charm of intelligent ignorance when combined with youth and beauty. Here that ignorance took its most graceful form. It was clearer every day that theirs was no love match. The lady (allowing for her girlish modesty) was too open; the gentleman too reserved. But daily intercourse would substitute for the frail passion, love, the firm but gradual foundations of habit, esteem, and affection: no such bad exchange, after all. So Katy was to go alone.

Lady Lucy, finding that the spouse she had selected for her niece was devoted to the turf and the dice box, had repented her hasty anger, and had written to request

her return. A brother of her father, also, struck by her spirit, or unwilling that so near a relative should be known to fill a dependent situation, had entreated her to make his house her home. But resisting both invitations, Honor had promised Mrs. Warner to remain at the Farm until Katy should return to Atherton.

Privately as everything was to be conducted, the preparations for so long an absence, and the settlement of so large a property, consumed nearly the whole time to the day fixed for the payment of the mortgage; and at last, that very day itself had come to be chosen for signing the deeds and performing the marriage ceremony.

Our friend Mr. Laughton, deeply engaged in this most important business, and other affairs connected with the executorship, had been little seen at Atherton. Sir Vivian, a bird of ill omen, was known

to be flitting about the neighbourhood, although his very name was carefully kept from the noble owner of the hall, just now furnished with a pleasant excitement in the presence of Mr. Langhton's favourite, Mrs. Osborne. To show her the beauties of the vicinity filled pleasantly the time of expectation, always lingering, and never felt to linger so painfully as when, as in this case, expectation was mingled with anxiety. Nobody could tell why, nobody perhaps would have confessed to the feeling, but it weighed upon every mind ; and as the time of suspense shortened (and it wanted now but three days to that fixed for the marriage), the weight pressed more and more heavily ; so they tried the old remedy, and drove about in hopes of leaving care behind.

One of Katy's greatest charms was her dark, glossy hair, curling in close rings like the tendrils of the vine, all round her

neck, that swan-like neck on which her head was placed so finely.

Before he had called her his queen, Mr. Langhton, who loved pet names, and had always petted Katy, used to call her Miss Wigsby. And really it was difficult to imagine that such a quantity of bright curls all grew upon that little head. The bright hair, the bright eyes, the bright complexion, the bright teeth, the dimples, the smiles, and the elastic figure, becoming every day more firm and vigorous—all denoted health as perfect as a woman could enjoy; but perhaps of all these tokens of youthful strength, the bright curls were the most striking.

Mrs. Bell, proud as she well might be of her beautiful daughter, took especial delight in all that displayed their shining luxuriance. Accordingly she had herself purchased for Katy one of those flapping broad-leaved Leghorn hats, almost in the

state in which they leave Tuscany, and brought it to Katy's room this very morning to be worn on an excursion to an ancient Roman encampment, commanding the extensive and varied views chosen by the masters of the world for their walled towns and entrenched stations in barbarian lands.

The party from the hall was to form part of the expedition. Mrs. Bell was to accompany Lady Cardonnel and Mrs. Osborne in the carriage, whilst the gentlemen rode on horseback with the younger ladies.

Little as the two girls, who lived with each other more as elder sister with younger than as governess and pupil, were disposed to differ, this excursion caused something like a discussion between them. Katy had taken one of her fancies that Honor should ride Britomarte. She wished to see how her two favourites

looked together ; this at least was the reason she alleged. Perhaps her secret thought might be a desire to leave the favourite horse as a parting gift to the friend who staid behind to comfort her grandmamma. Of this she said nothing ; and Honora, asserting her own desire to ride the good old pony as long as opposition on a trifling point seemed wise, at length consented.

Katy, with the new hat, and its long lutestring ribbons floating on the air, looked more than commonly radiant when she joined the party at the gate of the court-yard. Disappointment met her there in the shape of another pet, or rather of his absence.

Jacob Stokes, a true country boy, had not yet arrived at the age in which country boys delight in finery ; those days were yet to come. At present his tendencies lay so much in a contrary direction,

that Katy, whose first thought had been to procure a new suit for this devoted follower, found the new suit want renewal so often, that she had been fain to coax Mr. Langhton into giving the Atherton tailor a permanent and unlimited order for Jacob's apparel. Even this magnificent provision sometimes failed. Jacob's tastes were semi-aquatic, so that his clothes were as often wet as dry. Jacob was a climber, and spent in the air—that is to say, on the tree-tops after squirrels and birds' nests—much of the time not passed in the water, so that his jacket and trousers were much oftener torn than whole.

On this unlucky day both misfortunes had befallen the young gentleman. He had torn his every day jacket and trousers in the most unseemly manner the night before, in an encounter with a jagged branch in his descent from a fir tree; which tree he had mounted to secure a

pair of ring-doves, intended as a present for Miss Honor, having preferred the total ruin of his raiment and some damage to his skin to the possible loss of the birds. Whilst on this very morning an awkward ducking from a boat on the mere had soaked his Sunday garments through and through.

Poor Jacob was an orphan, so that there were no kind female friends to sew up his rents, or to dry his wettings. Indeed, Mrs. Bell, who used to declare that even Katy's fortune could never stand Jacob's waste, was one day heard to admit, in a fit of relenting, "that to be sure the child had never known the comfort of a mother to scold him." So he put on such rags as did not offend against decency, probably the pre-legacy suit, and being rather ashamed to present himself at the Hall stables—where, being a great favourite with masters and men, he was usually mounted

on such occasions,—he made his appearance on his own old donkey, and happening to fall in with his unfriend Mrs. Bell, got sent off so peremptorily that when enquired after by his young mistress, neither he nor Marigold could be found.

Mrs. Bell was indignant; she ordered Joseph to attend her daughter. She harangued on Jacob's iniquities: "In rags, and on his donkey!—but that boy will ride anything, all Atherton knows that. There is nothing with four legs that Jacob won't ride. Before he was five years old," continued she, addressing herself now to an enlarged audience, "some show-people who came to the village with a camel and a monkey, put him on the camel's hump, and had well nigh carried him off to take the place of the monkey, only Dr. Glenham and Joseph set off in pursuit—the doctor not choosing a Christian child should be carried off for a monkey! He cried to

go with them then; and some day or other you'll see that he'll be riding an elephant!"

Everybody took Jacob's part; and Major Delancy promised that some fine morning she should see him so smart that she would not know him.

Whilst this took place in one part of the group, a different dialogue was going on in another.

"Why are you not riding Britomarte? have you quarrelled with her?" said Lord Delancy to Katy.

"No," was the reply; "but Honor——"

"Oh, Miss Clive!" interrupted Lord Delancy, "she, I suppose, has quarrelled with the pony!"

"No, dear Lord Delancy.—no, indeed! I had much ado to make Honor ride Britomarte, but I wanted to see them together—" and then she stopped suddenly—"I'll tell you why another time."

By this time old Joseph had arrived, mounted on the steady steed that had for a dozen years drawn Mrs. Bell in her one-horse chaise to market; and dressed in the well-preserved suit in which he had, for at least as many years, driven his good mistress on week days, and attended church on the sabbath;—looking, in short, exactly like what he was, a most respectable farm servant, but matching Lord Delancy's carriage, postilions and grooms, much worse than Jacob, whether on camel or donkey! Katy jumped upon her pony; Mrs. Bell was handed into the carriage; and the cavalcade set forth.

The road up to the downs on the opposite side of the valley to the beautiful demesne of Lord Delancy—which, beginning in park and gardens, merged into a wild and wooded chase—was little more than a cart track. After leaving the village, with its cornfields and meadows, cultiva-

tion disappeared bit by bit. First came a bit of woodland, graphically called the "Scrubs," divided from the road by a stunted hedge, just now gay with the white blossoms of the wayfaring tree, giving token of a water-course from the hills ; whilst on the other side of the road, gay slips of the beautiful sainfoin, now in full flower, and gayer patches of turnip-seed in its yellow blossom, ran up between masses of russet furze, or the short, parched-up grass on the steep ascent—forming one of those contrasts seldom seen without the aid of man.

The Scrubs edged off into a ragged fir plantation; many trees looking dead or half dead, the branches on one side being altogether sere and bare; and then the trees ceased altogether in one wild group of Scotch firs, which flung their giant arms across the road, crowning the hill with a boldness worthy of the pencil of Salvator Rosa.

They were now fairly on the downs. The whole party paused to look at Atherton, which lay beneath them as a picture; its deep winding road, its bright waters, its grey church, its orchards, its cottages, its farm, and the magnificent park and mansion, which in spite of all assurance every one felt to be trembling in the balance.

Lord Delaney gazed on the view, then on his son, and on the two young women, as they sate together near the carriage, Katy bright as the summer air, Honor pale and silent beside her. A bitterness which he could not overcome passed across him as his eye fell upon that pallid face, and noted how cautiously his son avoided meeting those gentle looks.

“Now for the view which I shall show you,” said Katy; “the view which looks down upon three counties, and sees parts of more than I can tell. We must cross

this ocean of downs, and then descend the willowy bottom, and then climb up the Hollow Way, and there we are."

"It is not so far as Katy's description would make you think," said Lady Cardonnel parenthetically to Mrs. Osborne.

"The view, seen over an abrupt precipice, a sheer descent of craggy turf, is, on a clear day like this, really splendid."

"Why, then, are we waiting?" asked Lord Delaney; adding, with the cold respect which is so painful to its object, "If Miss Clive will ride on, the carriage may follow."

Honor made way instantly; and then exerted herself to manage the spirited creature she rode, and keep pace with the cavalcade.

The level plain was passed at a canter; and they descended, at a somewhat slower rate, a hill which dipped into a bottom, where sallow bushes betrayed the presence

of a stream that first trickled across a road ("The Hollow Way," as Katy called it,) which seemed hardly wide enough for the carriage, and crept winding up the lofty hill that fronted them ; the steepness being somewhat mitigated by the road sloping diagonally round the shoulder of the hill to the top. On the summit was a narrow table-land, marked by an embankment, said to be of the time of the Romans, terminated by the famous view.

They paused for a moment in the little valley, the postilions rather unwilling to risk their town-built carriage on so rugged a road, hoping, perhaps, that the ladies might prefer walking up the ascent. No such motion was made. Mrs. Bell was too well pleased to find herself, for the first time, in a carriage and four, to dream of quitting that post of grandeur ; and of the other two Mrs. Osborne feared the fatigue for Lady Cardonnel, and Lady Cardonnel

for Mrs. Osborne. So the postilions let the horses wet their mouths at the brooklet that crossed the road, and then slowly proceeded in the wake of the riders.

Katy was wild with glee. The fresh air of the hills, always so exhilarating; the exercise which she loved so well; the beauty of the day; above all, the manner in which her two favourites, Honor and Britomarte, became each other—delighted her very heart. Her new hat had fallen back, hanging only by the strings; her glossy curls were all dishevelled by the wind; and she galloped here and there, all her cares, even the coming wedding, forgotten; laughing and shouting with her sweet, young voice, and looking the whilst so exquisitely pretty that nobody cared to stop her.

Lord Delancy, who saw that she had attracted Arthur's attention, was quite provoked when her mother, in care for

her complexion, and rather scandalized at her want of decorum, called to her to put on her hat.

Katy was at the moment when she received this command rather ahead of Honora on the lower side of the winding road; and, chancing to obey it, gave the large flapping Leghorn hat, with its long streamers, such a toss right in the eyes of the high-bred and skittish mare that she sprang off like a racer, with the Hollow Way for a course and the precipice for a goal.

A general scream issued from the carriage.

"She is a dead woman," said Lord Delancy, in a voice so deep and unearthly that it was heard through all the shriller exclamations of the terrified women.

"Follow her! For God's sake stop her! Will you let her perish before your eyes?" cried Lady Cardonnel.

The old servant Joseph, to whom this was addressed, answered :

“As to stopping her, my lady, that is sooner said than done. And as to following, if any one attempts to follow her, he signs her death-warrant. That mare’s thorough-bred, and the sound of another horse following on the hard road would be like whip and spur. The poor young lady has one chance : the hill is the steepest in the country, and if she can but keep her heart and her seat—”

“Katy ! my Katy !” interrupted Mrs. Bell, with a mother’s piteous cry, “the pony’s off too !”

And it was indeed obvious that the pony was following at full, but unequal speed, the track of the mare. A few seconds made it also evident that this poor animal had not run away, but that it was urged forward by its rider, whose generous but uncalculating efforts to save her friend

would probably have no other result than her own destruction.

Joseph, although his own weight, and the age of his horse, rendered any attempt to overtake them out of the question, was so moved by the cries of his mistress, and the danger of her child, that he galloped forward together with the grooms to render assistance, if assistance were possible, or to bring relief from the terrible uncertainty that prevailed. The carriage horses were also urged to their utmost speed; and for the first time Major Delancy was missed and enquired for.

At the moment after Britomarte's starting, he had leaped the bank which divided the road from the down, and was now seen pursuing a parallel course higher up the hill; evidently intending to gain an angle from which he might dart on the terrified steed. It was the only chance of saving Honora, but the party in the carriage

saw with sinking hearts that it diminished every moment ; that the strength of the heavy roadster, and the skill of his rider, would tell as nothing compared with the spirit, the fleetness, and the goading fear of the blood animal on which she was mounted. The mare gained ground at every stroke ; Katy still following with hopeless perseverance ; and Arthur a little in advance of the pony, but still striving vainly to get up to Honor.

The road now wound suddenly round the shoulder of the hill, and one by one the riders disappeared from the party in the carriage, whose fear became more intense as the uncertainty increased and the precipice neared.

Mrs. Bell in spite of all dissuasion continued mechanically to scream, "My Katy ! my child ! my child ! my Katy !" Lady Cardonnel was in gasping, sobbing, choking hysterics ; and Mrs. Osborne

drowned in tears. But the person who probably felt most was he who neither wept, nor sighed, nor screamed, the stern and proud Lord Delancy, whose last glance at that gentle creature had been a glance of hatred, whose last word a word of scorn.

Moments seemed ages in that agony of fear, and yet all dreaded its termination. They urged the drivers forward as if they had dared to hope, and yet they all knew that humanly speaking hope there was none.

Suddenly a loud discordant shout was heard coming round the side of the hill, and fear for a moment seemed lost in certainty. All felt that it proceeded from Joseph's horror at witnessing the fatal plunge.

This conclusion passed through every mind, and Katy seemed now the only care; when suddenly as they were wheeling round the steep ascent, Joseph himself

was seen advancing, waving his hat and shouting with the voice of a stentor that all was well.

A few minutes more brought them to their intended destination—the Roman camp—where they found the whole of the actors in the scene as safe as Joseph had asserted, and reinforced by two new characters in the shape of Marigold, and Jacob Stokes on his beloved donkey.

When they arrived, old Joseph had just lifted Honora from her saddle and placed her on the grass, where she sat, very pale, trembling, and silent. Major Delancy, equally silent and equally pale, was holding the pony. Jacob, still seated on his donkey, kept a tight grip of Britomarte, whilst Katy stood leaning over her dear governess, alternately laughing and crying; now kissing the pale cheeks of her friend, now shaking hands with Jacob Stokes; praising him, defending

Britomarte, and accusing herself all in a breath. Mrs. Bell seized on Katy for the double purpose of hugging and scolding, and the rest of the party showered question after question upon the truant boy and Major Delaney. From his short breathless answers and the more detailed account of Katy's squire, it appeared that that faithful adherent, finding himself excluded from the expedition, and thinking, as he expressed it, that his young lady might want him, had set off by a nearer bridle road to the place of destination, where he lay perdu behind the bank. When Britomarte approached, he and Marigold started up so suddenly before her eyes, that their appearance and his shout of alarm had the effect of turning that sensitive animal from her dangerous path, and caused her so far to slacken her speed, that in clambering over the steep bank that bordered the road on the safer side, Miss Clive's own

efforts had stopped her. Jacob, no mean judge, volunteered high praise of the young lady's courage and horsemanship :

“Miss Katy could not have sate the mare better.”

Katy had been taken care of by her betrothed bridegroom. Too late to stop the first runaway, he had probably saved the life of the second, whose over-urged pony had reached the very brink of the crag without power to check its speed, and now stood quivering in every limb with the sense of escaped danger.

The whole party, leaving the mother and daughter to their natural transports, had now gathered round Miss Clive, who sate, as in a trance, making no reply to Lady Cardonnel's congratulations, and neither returning nor seeming to notice the affectionate caresses of Mrs. Osborne. She remained seemingly unconscious of all that was

passing round her until Lord Delancy asked in a broken voice :

“ Are you hurt, Honora ? ”

The name and the accent seemed to thrill through her frame. She shivered ; looked up with one of her sweet smiles, said, “ No, I am quite well ! ” and sank back in a fainting fit upon the turf.

It is hardly necessary to add that none of them looked at the famous prospect they had come to visit.

CHAPTER XV.

TEMPTATION.

WHILST these events were proceeding at the old Roman Station, the Rectory was the scene of a somewhat unexpected visitation.

It had happened this morning that the good doctor had received a proof of the "Troades," which, printed at the University Press, and submitted to a learned friend in one of the colleges, was enriched with annotations and queries, which however profitable to the future correctness of the edition, had, for the moment, the effect

of driving the excellent editor well nigh crazy! Questions which seemed settled were thrown open; doubts which had been smoothed down into certainties were resolved into their old unsatisfactory form; and a universal note of interrogation seemed spread over the new readings, which were to convince every scholar, from Cambridge to Göttingen. Dear Dr. Glenham felt, as many a dabbler in print has felt before him, that the pen of a critical friend is a sharp weapon.

When the packet arrived he was in the act of dressing; and, stopping the operation of the toilet to look over the proof, ran down, just as he was, to his library, to examine various editions, and muster up authorities for the use of a disputed monosyllable, which seemed to him a question of life and death.

Now the doctor adhered rigidly to his old, clerical costume of black stockings

and knee breeches ; and having forgotten to leave off the gauze stockings which he wore in the winter (without editing a play of Euripides, one may contrive sometimes to forget that it is summer in our climate), and being in the act of donning his silken hose, he still presented the somewhat anomalous appearance of one black leg and one white one, when several hours afterwards, Sir Vivian Delancy was ushered into his library.

At no point of his editorial labours had that den of disorder assumed such an appearance of confusion as now. Books covered the tables ; books littered the chairs ; books strewed the floor. The room looked as untidy as the master—who, besides the odd legs, had one knee-buckle unfastened, no studs in either wristband, which straggled forth from his grey dressing-gown, and no cravat round his neck—and this at four o'clock of a fine summer day !

Host and visitor were taken aback; this, however, could not last long. Dr. Glenham, always a gentleman, recovered at once from his learned abstraction, and from the shame of being caught in it; and Sir Vivian, a man of the world, with a point to gain, took care to see as little of the disorder as might be: he even, whilst the rector was clearing a seat for him, contrived to intimate his admiration of the rare scholarship evinced by the books amidst which he stood, and to express something like envy of the learned abstraction, of which the result would be the enlightenment of the world in general, and of the universities in particular.

The doctor, now completely aroused, kept his own counsel as to the manner in which his labours had been called to account by one of the most eminent luminaries of those universities; and, waiving his guest's compliments with something

like a deprecatory smile, requested to know in what he could be of use to him?

“ You hardly seem to remember me, Dr. Glenham,” said the guest; “ yet, surely, you were Rector of Atherton when I returned from India, longer ago than I like to remember.”

“ Yes,” replied the doctor, “ I was so, but your visit was, I think, a short one; and I was much engaged at Cambridge, not having chosen to resign my college tutorship, until the examination of my pupils had taken place,—two of them were wranglers of the year. We must, however, have met; and it does not need a personal acquaintance to inspire me with a deep interest in the welfare of any of the family of Delaney.”

Sir Vivian bowed as accepting the compliment, and the good doctor continued—

“ I owe to Lord Delaney the home where my days have passed easily, hap-

pily, and not, I trust, without benefit to my flock. He has much contributed by his society and his co-operation to my personal enjoyment, and my pastoral usefulness; whilst to his son Arthur I am bound by all those associations which link the old to the young. I have patted his head as a child, and have lived to see him fulfilling the promise of his boyhood, as a brave and honourable man. Next to my own household I love the Delaney's; and I confess, Sir Vivian, that the sight of you in this house is very pleasant to me, since I cannot but hope, that even now, at the eleventh hour, you have done me the honour to select me as the bearer of friendly overtures to persons who are, after all, your nearest kinsmen. I know that there is in the very incidents of a lawsuit (which is, after all, a sort of warfare)—an element which, while it pushes on to conquest, serves also to embitter the combatants.

But when once the battle is won, it is in the nature of all men—especially, as we are apt to believe of all Englishmen—to forgive and forget—a process much easier, by the way, to the victor than to the vanquished. If you come to me as a peace-maker, I shall most readily accept the office.”

Dr. Glenham spoke in perfect good faith. Lord Delaney, too proud a man to make unnecessary confidences, had never alluded to the private wrongs which had envenomed the one great wound; and the simple scholar, ignorant of the desperate state of his noble friend's affairs, hoped and believed that the sore might yet be healed by a few concessions on either side, and that Sir Vivian had fixed upon him as the mediator.

“First, let me ask, my good sir, whether you happen to know how matters stand betwixt us?” inquired his guest.

“No other way,” replied the Doctor, “than as all men who read the papers know of the great will cause. One of those causes terrible to the contending parties, in which, wherever the abstract right may lie, there is on either side such a show of reason and such a chance of success that lawyers may honestly urge on their clients from term to term, from year to year, from lustre to lustre, until the expenses of the loser may even exceed the value of the original object of contention. In such a case it behoves the rich man who succeeds to consider the state of the poor kinsman who loses, and—”

“Why, there it is,” interrupted Sir Vivian. “There is the crying injustice ! They, the losers and their friends, talk of the great law-suit as the cause of their ruin, utterly forgetting the reckless extravagance of generation upon generation,—builders of mansions, collectors of pic-

tures, furnishers of libraries, wasters and spendthrifts in every shape ; and then—Nay, hear me out, good doctor ;—then, when the first and only man of their race, who for two centuries has known how to make money and how to keep it, steps in to preserve the old property in the old name, he is visited with as much reproach and reprobation as if, in lending his own money, he had committed a highway robbery, or as if demanding it back were a murder.”

“ I am to understand then, Sir Vivian,” said the Rector, “ that the report which announced you as the real holder of the large mortgages on your kinsman’s property is true ? And if you have indeed advanced the money with the view of retaining the old estates in the old name, and making Major Delaney your heir in fact, as he is in law, I for one, shall hear of such a purpose with unmingled pleasure and admiration.”

Sir Vivian answered the part of this speech which suited him, leaving the conclusion unnoticed.

“ Yes, I hold mortgages over the entire property ; and if not redeemed by twelve o’clock at noon on the day after to-morrow, notice of foreclosure having been duly given, the estates and manors of Atherton and Delancy, with all their royalties and dependencies, become absolutely mine. It was not, however, of this, Dr. Glenham, that I came to speak. They tell me that you are excellent as a parish priest,—the friend as well as the pastor of your flock ; and I come to make appeal to you in that character, in behalf of the widow and the orphan—not such as require the common succour that riches can give ; but those to whom riches has proved a peril far greater than poverty ; the simple-minded parents who are about to fling the richest heiress in England, herself almost a child, into the arms of a landless and penniless soldier.”

“Be very sure, Sir Vivian,” said the Doctor, “that the whole circumstances of the estate are known to them all. Mrs. Warner declared to me herself, that the son of her old landlord, one whom she had known from his earliest childhood, was in her eye preferable to the son of the richest Duke in England. Katy will have enough for both.”

“A man ten years her senior !”

“Pshaw ! my good sir !—a man of six-and-twenty and a girl of sixteen are contemporaries. Katy, to be sure, is full young. But these great heirs are somewhat in the position of princes, and are affianced and wedded at an earlier age than common mortals. Poor things ! it is a part of their destiny to lose the joyous privilege of girlhood, the happy years that come between the restraints of the child and the cares of the matron. But the young couple are going abroad, where,

without any set form of instruction, so quick and docile a girl as Katy will insensibly acquire all that is wanting to fit her for the station she will have to fill. No man is more accomplished than Major Delaney, or more calculated to train a clever uneducated girl into a cultivated wife. She is most fortunate in having fallen into such hands."

"You think so?" said Sir Vivian, with a very peculiar expression. Then drawing his chair close to his host he continued in a low voice and with frequent pauses:—

"Have you seen, Dr. Glenham, a young woman, by name Honora Clive, who now fills the post of governess to Miss Warner? Yes? You know her then? Did you ever hear, that three years ago, that young lady was known as the daughter of Colonel Clive, and of his wife Lady Honora, daughter of the famous beauty, the Countess of Rossborough, and connected with half the

noble families in Ireland? No? You did not know this? Well, this young lady, whose father and brother were then alive, was the object of an idolatrous passion on the part of Arthur Delaney. You look mistrustfully. Ask Lady Cardonnel; ask, if you will, Major Delaney or Miss Clive. They were quartered together at Valenciennes during the time the allied armies occupied France. The brother and the lover were bosom friends."

"Do you mean to say that they were betrothed?" enquired Dr. Glenham.

"Of that I know nothing. What I do know is that three years ago he was madly in love. The father and brother were living then; now they are dead; and she is here a poor governess, the hired governess of his destined bride."

"A strange tale!" exclaimed the Rector, in spite of himself much startled.

"A true tale!" said the visitor, "on that

I will pledge my life. Make the best you can of it, and you will find the poor girl deserted and the rich one married. You know Miss Clive, you say. I have never seen her; but I have heard and I can well believe that the elegant and cultivated woman still maintains her influence; that the red and white of Katy's cheek is valueless in her suitor's eyes, compared with the grace, the talent, the composed sweetness of her rival. Think you yourself what chance of domestic felicity may be found in an alliance beginning with a preference for another. Harken, Dr. Glenham, these women are, as it were, flung upon your protection. It becomes your character and your office to acquaint Mrs. Warner with what you have heard; to caution her that the future happiness, aye, and the future conduct and reputation of a girl so young, so beautiful, and so unguarded as her grand-

daughter, may be wrecked in this union. There is no man whose position renders him so fit to give this warning. There is no one," added he, in a still lower voice, "so interested in the warning being heeded. Tell her to make her granddaughter at once a ward in Chancery; and then, if three years hence, the fine and spirited lad, her old playmate, who did not wait for her riches to lay his heart at her feet, should be objected to for want of wealth, I promise to settle upon him all this estate of Atherton, with its goodly farms and manors, its waters and its woodlands, its chases and its downs—aye, and the advowson to boot, which would be a provision for his brother. Break off this marriage—only break off this marriage—and rely on me for more than I have promised." And without waiting for an answer Sir Vivian departed.

And what said our good Doctor, as

still with one white leg and one black, he sank back into his seat?

“ Tempter !” cried he, “ tempter !”

It is one of the safeguards of the simple, good folk of this world, that the cunning wicked ones seldom give them credit for real goodness. They think, for the most part, that everybody is marketable, and that any resistance they may happen to meet with will yield to a higher bidding ; and so they lose the benefit of much previous caution by a too open avowal of their ulterior purpose.

Had Sir Vivian contented himself with the impression which he had really made, by stating that which was actually true of Major Delancy and Miss Clive, and garnishing that truth with his own false inferences, he would so far have carried his point as to have sent the Doctor full of alarm to caution Mrs. Warner. The allusion to Harry, and the bribe of the

bequest of Atherton, showed at once that either a revenge was his object, for which no price could be too high; or that, as seemed most probable, he feared that the long-coveted property should be snatched from his grasp at the last moment, redeemed by Richard Strange's hoards.

"I will go to her," thought the Doctor, "to warn her against this man's machinations. I'll go to her at once," resolved he, magnanimously, throwing aside the Greek commentator which had stolen into his hand; "and then I'll come back and put up the proof. After all I was a fool to vex myself about my good friend's criticisms. He is an able man, a very able man; but he has not given himself to this play for six months as I have done. So I shall stick to my own readings, and desire the printer to send the other sheets straight to me."

A wise resolution, which, to the honour of both these worthies, caused no coolness on either side.

CHAPTER XVI.

RELENTINGS.

WHEN Dr. Glenham reached the Great Farm, he found its excellent mistress just recovering from the emotion which she had undergone, in hearing of the danger of the two girls, who might be said to divide her heart between them: Honor's sweetness had fairly captivated Mrs. Warner.

"Think if we had lost her!" exclaimed the old lady, "Katy would have died too; for, first and last, her giddiness was the cause of the danger. She would insist on

Honor's riding the mare. Then she flirted her great hat right in front of that skittish creature's eyes. And then, poor thing, she set off as hard as the pony could lay legs to the ground, to follow the runaway, thus causing her to redouble her speed. We never can be thankful enough to that little lad, Jacob Stokes, who is always in the way when he is wanted, and was certainly, under Providence, the saving of dear Honor; as Major Delaney, by his great presence of mind and admirable horsemanship, was the rescuer of Katy. What a blessing it is to think that that dear child will have such a protector through the trials of life."

"I am exactly of your opinion, Mrs. Warner," said the Doctor; "but I have just had a visitor whose object was to inspire both of us with very different feelings."

And then, being alone with the good

lady—Mrs. Bell having insisted on the young ladies' lying down, and being engaged in narrating the escape, and dilating upon Jacob's merits to everybody who would listen to her—he related the whole conversation.

“May Heaven forgive him!” said she. “He must be as old as I am, and yet he thinks of nothing but money and revenge. The money he must leave behind him, as poor Richard Strange has done. But revenge—that is a grievous load to carry with him to the grave, and beyond the grave! May God turn his heart, for He alone can! As to this matter, dear Dr. Glenham, it is certain that Arthur Delancy did propose to Honor, three years ago, and that she refused him. He told Katy so himself, and that accounts for a sort of shyness which has always existed between them; men seldom pardon a rejection of that sort. It always oversets Honor to

think of the days when she lived with her father and her brother Lionel. You know that she gave her little portion to purchase Captain Clive's commission, and to pay his debts. He seems to have been one of those charming persons (not very prudent) for whom wives, and sisters, and mothers, often do sacrifice their all. Then her father's death left her homeless, and she lived with an aunt, who was a match-maker. But Honor did not like match-making; so she came here: a blessing wherever she goes! I should miss her almost as much as Katy."

The next morning brought Mr. Osborne and the marriage settlements, but no Mr. Langhton. His partner, however, assured Lord Delancy that he might rely on seeing him with the money by ten o'clock the succeeding forenoon, when the deeds were to be signed, and the money at once paid to Sir Vivian, to whom and to whose

solicitor formal notice to that effect had been given. This was driving matters fearfully close; but Mr. Langhton had never yet failed, Mr. Osborne asserted, in a business appointment, and would certainly not begin his short-comings with a client whom he so much respected, a friend whom he so much loved. The reason assigned for the delay was the receipt of a large sum of the Strange effects, which was to be paid late that evening. He was also to bring a special license.

Accordingly, the gentlemen were closeted all the morning, reading over the settlements at their absent friend's request. Lord Delancy's composure surprised his son; who, indeed, showed more anxiety on his account than he did.

The ladies had agreed to take an early dinner at the Hall, and spend the afternoon in fishing on the mere. But only Mrs. Bell and her daughter arrived. Mrs.

Warner had been a little shaken by the after-shock of yesterday's alarm, and Honor stayed to take care of her.

Between six and seven these two friends were seated together in an arbour, where lilac and acacia, the wandering clematis, and the tasselled lime gave fragrance the whole summer through. At this moment, however, a profusion of honeysuckles, straggling and twisting amongst them all, shed their unrivalled perfume upon the air, beginning to emit their delicious odours just as the sun declines and the dew rises. In front of the arbour a broad turf-walk led to the house, bordered on either side by a row of pinks, alternately white and red, backed up by clumps of white rocket, double July-flowers and fraxinella, and these again by moss-roses, white lilies, and sweet peas. Behind them nicely trained espaliers formed a verdant wall, concealing a kitchen garden, which, if

it had existed in our days, would have carried off half the prizes in the country. That kitchen garden was the pride of old Joseph's heart.

He, however, was away in the hay-field. It was his little grandson Jacob, who had just deposited upon the tea-table, at which Honor was officiating, a plate of strawberries, real hautbois, which he declared could not be matched at the Hall. They came from Miss Katy's own garden, and he had been sent from the lake on purpose to gather them for her grandmamma and Miss Honor. "Miss Katy," Jacob said, "had had a great mind to come herself; but the Major had been answerable for his choosing the best, and said he might be trusted. He liked the Major. Should he say the strawberries were good?"

"Excellent! Jacob. Grandmamma's kindest love," said Honor.

Jacob turned to go, and at the side of the path stood Lord Delaney.

“There is no mischief, dear Mrs. Warner? No accident,” said he, giving Jacob a kind parting tap. “I am not a herald of ill fortune. But, having been engaged all the morning with important papers, and unable to get here, I could not satisfy myself without ascertaining in person that you have not suffered from the agitation of hearing of our late sad adventure, and that she whose danger caused us all so much alarm has recovered the physical ill effects of such peril. We saw yesterday, that, perfect as was her self-command in the hour of struggle, her strength gave way when the demand for it had passed.”

“Oh, my lord !” said Honor, “do not speak so kindly, or I shall give way again. There are some voices whose sympathy goes straight to the heart. Your goodness would upset me quite.”

“Well, you and Mrs. Warner must give

me some tea," replied he cheerfully, as Rachel and her followers appeared in the walk with the bright copper tea-kettle and the whole apparatus ; "and then, with her leave, we will have a little talk."

Nowhere is the meal so dear to woman, the English tea eaten in such perfection, as at an old-fashioned farm-house. The thick, fresh cream, the newly-churned butter, the home-baked bread, the home-made cakes, and the female ministry, in the sweet evening air, perfumed with flowers and with the passage of heavy waggons loaded with hay—all made it a feast of country luxuries ; yet, even with the addition of Katy's strawberries, the meal passed away almost untasted.

Nearly at the same moment with her serving-maidens, Mrs. Warner retired to the house ; making a pretext of putting in water a white rose, in which she had found the earliest golden beetle of the year.

Katy loved to look at those glittering green wings, and then to return the pretty insect unharmed to its tree.

“You stay there, my dear,” was her parting injunction. So, very calm and very pale, Honor stayed.

Paler and less calm, Lord Delaney stood before her.

“I come to you, a culprit, Miss Clive;—nay; hear me out, dear Honor! I know that you desire none of these confessions, but it is a comfort to me to pour them forth. When, between five and six years ago, my son, then a very young man, made acquaintance with your accomplished brother, one of the most promising officers in the service, I was delighted to promote in every way I could, an intimacy which so thoroughly commanded my approbation. They visited me together at Delaney Castle, and at my house in town; and I travelled with them in Switzerland,

Germany, and Italy ; never separating, in short, until the war which terminated at Waterloo recalled the young men to their respective ⁹regiments, whilst I myself returned to England almost as much attached to Lionel Clive as to my own Arthur. Little did either divine that a few short months would cause me to repent that intimacy ; that the chance which threw my son into the same town with Lionel's father and sister—already predisposed to be his friends, from the friendship which united him with their son and brother—should change all my feelings towards the family. But already, although I dared not own it even to myself, I felt—I knew, that the fatal suit on which all our fortunes were staked was virtually lost ; and that, in marrying a girl of high family and small portion, Arthur was insuring misery to himself and to her. I found all my fears verified when I heard from Lady Cardonnel that, for the

first time in his life, he loved a woman worthy of him in every sense of the word. I told her (what indeed she already guessed) how matters stood with me; and her next letter brought the unexpected tidings that Arthur had sought your hand and had been rejected. When my son returned to England this subject was never mentioned. Then came successive blows upon your house and mine; the death of poor Lionel, followed so rapidly by that of Colonel Clive; the loss of this law-suit, and the discovery of the real mortgagee. In these miserable money anxieties every generous feeling seems to die; and this passage of Arthur's life was forgotten like a dream; until, most unexpectedly, I found Miss Clive in the governess of the young girl — the very sweet young girl (let me do her no injustice!) whom circumstances had induced me to select as my future daughter-in-law. The name, the

christian name, the face and voice so like poor Lionel, and, more than all, the averted looks of Arthur, convinced me that I saw indeed the Honor Clive whom he had so loved."

Here Honor broke in—"Nay ; now, my lord, hear me, and believe me, I conjure you, when I say that, strange as it seems, I never heard the name of Atherton in conjunction with yours ; nor ever, till we were at the gates of this house, heard Lord Delancy mentioned as the landlord of Mrs. Warner. Then, Mr. Langhton can tell you how earnestly I entreated him to return."

"He has told me so," said Lord Delancy. "I know that you were ignorant of the connexion."

"Without confessing all that had passed," continued she, "I felt that I could not convey to Mr. Langhton the strong motives that prompted my desire to return. I submitted therefore to enter the family,

and to incur the risk of a suspicion, which I rejoice to find is now swept away from your lordship's mind. And, indeed, except the grief of seeing my dear brother's friends so cold to his poor sister (and that is over now), what harm has been done? Major Delancy, except in one generous expression of regret to see me in a dependant situation, has never breathed a word which could imply a recollection of our former acquaintance; and when to-morrow he carries away as his bride that sweetest child of all the earth, fresh and pure as one of her own roses, he will not, I think, find her the worse for the six months that we have spent together in sisterly love."

"Honor!" said Lord Delancy, "I come to say to you that I repent not only of my sins towards you (those, I see, that you have forgiven), but of my deep wrongs towards Arthur and towards myself. I have been

carried away by many passions, all of them evil,—by pride, by hatred, by an inordinate love of station and position, and an inordinate worship of my own family. Partly, too, I have been led astray by sins that hide themselves in fairer names,—by a devotion to art as it lives in splendid mansions, and in great collections,—by a love of science and of learning, as seen in great libraries,—of fine scenery as shown in drest gardens : as if beauty were not as general as the blue sky and the green earth !—as if the best books were not also the commonest !—as if home were not as dear in the cottage as in the palace ! The one thing, Honor, that cannot be supplied is love. It is my firm belief that Arthur's affections are still yours ; and I come to you to lay his fate and mine at your feet. Let this mercenary marriage be broken off. Let us go forth poor and happy. There will still be something left. The Commander-in-

Chief knew and prized your father—knows and prizes Arthur. I shall not be too proud to share a soldier's home ; and if I have seemed proud and stern to you, Honor, only consent to be my daughter, and you shall find how well your father will pay his long debt of love."

Honor leaned her head on her hands. Perhaps she prayed for power to resist what was, indeed, a sore temptation. If so, her prayer was granted. She looked up with gentle composure.

" My dear lord," she said, " I thank you from the bottom of my heart, for a goodness and a confidence which will be a comfort to me as long as I live. But this which you propose must not be. These dear and excellent women who have behaved so nobly and so trustingly must not be abandoned. Strong, indeed, must have been your determination to sacrifice your own wishes and your own interests to the

fancied wishes of your son, when it caused you to forget that your honour and his are pledged to Katy, and to those who have influenced her in this engagement. Be assured that Major Delancy would not allow such a sacrifice. Be certain also, that no happiness could follow an union so brought about. He will find, as we all find, that the only true felicity is in the path of duty. He and that sweetest girl will depart to-morrow for the Continent—she looking to him for every act and word. Think how that will endear her to one so kind and generous as Arthur ! As for me, I shall only have too many homes ! Mrs. Warner, Mrs. Osborne, Lady Cardonnel, Mr. Langhton, my own relations, are all earnest in invitations ; and your lordship will see, before many years are passed, that I shall be amongst your own guests at Atherton, with no other feeling on any side than that of the sincerest friendship.”

CHAPTER XVII.

A WEDDING MORNING.

THE next morning there was not a cloud in the sky, hardly a breeze to wave the uncut grass in the upland pastures: never was dawn so lovely as that which ushered in the wedding-day of the heir of Atherton and his blooming bride.

It had need be pregnant with good omens, that busy morning, when, be the marriage private as it may, so much of the outward and the frivolous is mingled strangely and jarringly with the deepest emotions, with trembling hope and lurk-

ing fear. Ah, those orange-blossoms! those Brussels veils! how often have they overhung tearful eyes and pallid cheeks! Taken at the very best, say that affection have presided over the union, let friends consent and fortune smile—even then what a wrench it is from old habits, old homes, and old affections. That bridegroom had need be very dear for whose sake the beloved resigns the companions of her whole maiden life, the familiar household names, the every-day sights and sounds, the thousand cherished associations, of which the full charm is never felt till they are lost.

With Katy it was a more than ordinary plunge. She left not only the dear home of which she had been the delight, but the safe and happy station in which she had been reared;—that station too low for pride, too affluent for want, full of healthy occupation, and exempt from

all restraint except that of womanly propriety, which is perhaps amongst the most blessed upon earth. She was to return to Atherton, but she left for ever the Great Farm. Poor Katy!

It seemed as if until that morning she had never fully realized her position. She hung round her mother's neck; she clung to her grandmother's knees; she poured forth floods of tears on Honor's bosom. It is quite certain that she hugged old Rachel, Flora, Marigold, Britomarte, and the pony; it is not quite certain that she did not hug Jacob Stokes.

The first drop of consolation came from that young gentleman:

"Never mind me, Miss Katy! Don't take leave of me, I'm going too," cried Jacob. "Don't you see how fine I am? I'm to be your page, or whatever you choose to make of me, and Britomarte and Marigold are to follow with the Major's

horses. That was settled last night in the boat. The Major asked me how you liked your new maid, and whether I thought you had a fancy for any more of your old people. Bless you, Miss Katy, you may carry away half Atherton if you like. He and the old Lord think of nothing but making you happy — just look at my jacket?”

Katy turned him round and round; admired the silver filligree buttons; thought how kind it was to take with her the things she had been used to at home; wiped away her tears, and was comforted.

Mr. Langhton's non-arrival the night before had rendered it necessary (as has been said elsewhere) to transact on that very wedding morning the formal official business of the redemption of the title-deeds. He had written in the clearest manner to Lord Delancy that he should ar-

rive at ten o'clock ; that the settlements should then be signed, the money paid, and the young couple married. The Delancy Arms was the spot fixed upon for redeeming the securities, and none who knew Mr. Langhton could allow themselves to doubt of his being there in time.

Accordingly the party from the Hall, and Dr. Glenham, met at nine o'clock at the farm, the bridegroom bringing no other present to the flower-loving girl than a nosegay of such as she loved best. They suited well her delicate dress ; and the beauty which, enhanced by sensibility, seemed more winning than ever.

Mr. Osborne had brought with him the unsigned settlements, which lay on a table at one end of the old stone hall, where the breakfast was set out, and the company assembled. They proceeded to discuss the viands, partly, as the lawyer observed, to save time, partly to beguile by any sort of

occupation the hour that would probably elapse before the arrival of the guardian, without whose presence all these preparations would be vain.

The breakfast was silent and sad. A doubt, for which they would have found it difficult to account, had crept upon most of the party.

Mr. Osborne, who would have gone to the stake upon his partner's good faith, and who was besides better acquainted than the rest with the cause of his absence, began to count up the possible impediments to his return.

His wife even more reliant upon Stephen, and quite ignorant of the eventualities which alarmed her husband, began seriously to suspect that Sir Vivian (of whom she had pretty much the notion that a child has of some bad genius in an Eastern Tale) might have waylaid and murdered their admirable friend.

Dr. Glenham, remembering his recent visit, thought he had found some more supple agent, innkeeper or postilion, to drive the good lawyer in a wrong direction, or to overturn the chaise.

Lady Cardonnel, accustomed to her brother-in-law's ill fortune, thought that some new stroke of fate had interposed to prevent the clearance of his property.

The mother and grandmother, now that the trying moment approached, thought only of the grief of parting, and rejoiced in every delay.

Major Delancy looked at the two girls as they sate in silence side by side, and hand in hand, and felt that the sacrifice must be made, and would probably be made in vain.

His father was calm. It seemed as if his anxiety was only for his son ; and that the rescue of his ancestral property from his treacherous kinsman had become a secondary object.

Ten o'clock struck. It was heard first from a pretty French time-piece, on the mantel-piece, a present from Lady Cardonnel; then from the old house clock in the kitchen; then from the church tower; then from the great turret clock at the Hall.

"These country clocks are never right," said Mr. Osborne; "I set my watch yesterday by the Horse Guards."

On consulting that watch it told the same tale; so did the watches of the other gentlemen; so did the old sundial which Honor ran to examine.

It seemed as if the charm of Mr. Langhton's punctuality was broken. He had fixed a certain hour; that hour was passed, and he had not arrived. Nobody blamed him. They who loved the good lawyer, which included everybody present, began, some loudly and some silently, to entertain the most unreasonable fears for his safety.

"Can Sir Vivian have petitioned the

Chancellor to make Katy a ward of the court?" enquired Dr. Glenham of Mr. Osborne.

"The Chancellor is cognizant of the matter," was the reply.

"Has any one heard of Sir Vivian to-day or yesterday?" asked Major Delancy.

"I saw him with two other gentlemen at the Delancy Arms, as I came up the village," said the Rector.

Time crept on. The minute hand advanced upon the clock; the shadow traversed the old sundial; and eleven was heard tinkling from the little French time-piece, jangling loudly from the kitchen, and pealing in deep tones, softened by distance, from the church tower and the Hall.

The suspense now became intolerable. Again, for the twentieth time, Mr. Osborne walked into the court to look or listen for the expected carriage.

"Don't you think," enquired Dr. Glen-

ham, when he returned again unsuccessful; "does not it seem to you better that the settlements should be signed? Mr. Langhton will then have only to glance at the signatures, and carry the money at once to the mortgagee.

A momentary pause ensued, agitated and agitating. The lawyer made no reply.

"Surely it will be best," said Lady Cardonnel. "Arthur ! Katy !"

Major Delancy advanced to lead his fair bride to the table, but all on a sudden Katy escaped from his hands, and flung herself at her grandmother's feet.

"Grandmamma ! dear grandmamma ! Major Delancy does not love me ! How should he, poor ignorant child that I am ? He does not love me, and he does love dear Honor. He does not say so. He will not say so. But I know it. I feel it. Aye !" said she, in a lower voice, "and

Honor loves him. I always thought so, I don't know why; and perhaps I ought not to say such a thing. But I am sure of it. Only see how she is crying at this moment. And look at him. And look at dear Lord Delancy. They love each other, and it has been that thought which has kept me from the feeling which would otherwise have made me so unhappy now. Listen! Grandmamma. One half of this money will pay off these mortgages. Let dear Honor have it as if she were really my sister; and let her marry Major Delancy; and let me stay with mamma and you. I shall be as happy as the day is long, when Honor is happy too; and let her live at the Hall, and come and see us every day. What could we do without Honor? How could we be happy if we made her miserable? Let Arthur and Honor have this money, dear grandmamma!"

"Oh! that I could, my Katy!" said

Mrs. Warner, her venerable head shaking more than ever. "But you are a minor, my child, and till you are of age we can do nothing."

"Ah!" said Katy, "I am sure Mr. Langhton can manage it; and here he is, thank Heaven!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

SIGNING THE SETTLEMENTS.

OH! Mr. Langhton, you are come just in time," continued Katy, whose impetuosity had borne down all interruption, flying to meet him, and clinging to his arm.

"Quite in time," replied he, smiling, and flinging down a great blue bag heavy with parchments. "These are the title-deeds, and you are free."

"But listen to me, Mr. Langhton," persisted Katy. "Honor must have half of this money—more than half, three parts. Now listen," said she, almost in a whisper,

“Major Delancy does not want to marry me, indeed he does not; and I do not want to marry him or anybody; I am too young. Let me live with mamma and grandmamma here in my dear old home, and give her the money, and make everybody happy; now, do!”

“Stop a moment Katy; nobody shall marry you against your will, my queen,” said Mr. Langhton. “Be content, Mrs. Warner, all will go well; only let me tell my good lord here that he is his own man again; every estate freed; galleries, collections, libraries, all: he has but one creditor, and she will not be a hard one.”

“But, dear Langhton,” said Lord Delancy, “you cannot imagine, even if it were possible, that we are capable of taking advantage of this sweet child’s proposal; I answer for my son as for myself; aye, and I answer for another: Honor would not let us if we were so

base." His son and Honor pressed each a hand.

"Have patience for an instant," said our friend Stephen. "Of course, Osborne, you guessed that I was detained in crossing from Dublin. We had head-winds all the way. I promise you I had a race for it. However, I brought down half-a-dozen undeniable witnesses; had half-an-hour to spare by the clock and by the sun; and the thing is settled for ever by their own admission."

One word in this speech in spite of its peculiar interest had arrested general attention, and "From Dublin!" burst from several voices.

"Yes, from Dublin," resumed the lawyer. "You have left the name blank in the settlement as I told you?" said he to his partner. "Yes, I see you have. Well, now, good folk, sit down, and I will satisfy your

curiosity. Sit down, everybody. And you, Honor, be pleased to listen. Do you remember a little old prayer-book which had belonged to your grandmother, Lady Rossborough, the famous beauty, and some letters of her writing, which I craved permission to read? Well, that little prayer-book had on the fly-leaf a name and a date written in yellow faded ink, the maiden name, as you told me, of your grandmother, the second wife of your grandfather, the Earl of Rossborough. Now it so happened that I had been searching after this very name for five or six months; searching, I think, all over England, amongst churchyards and parish registers, and registers of all sorts, except just the Peerage. Now, I recognised at a glance the handwriting of that inscription, and the initials of the donor; also, I recognised the character of the packet of old letters. I said nothing to you then, because there

were still a good many points to verify and make clear, not only to my own satisfaction, but to that of certain sages learned in the law; amongst the rest to the Lord High Chancellor. Early this morning all was settled. I took care to have Sir Vivian's money ready before. And when I tell you, my dear lord, and you, Mrs. Warner, that the name was Elizabeth Brown of Weston, near Southampton; that the letters were in her character; and that the words on the fly-leaf were in the handwriting of Richard Strange; in short, that our fair friend Honora Clive is the only surviving child of her only daughter, and the actual heir to the moiety of the assets of the said Richard Strange; the missing legatee for whom I have been seeking;—why I think you will admit that my precaution of leaving the name blank in the settlements was by no means superfluous.”

The conclusion, not so logical as the usual deductions of our clear-headed friend, was received in almost total silence. The good lawyer tapped his snuff-box, drew himself up, and muttered, half unconsciously, the words of Prospero :—

“ ‘ So glad of this as they I cannot be ;

—————But my content

At nothing can be more.’ ”

He finished by kissing Honor's forehead, who hid her blushing face upon his shoulder.

Mrs. Warner, more moved by joy than by the distress in which she had borne so true a part, folded her hands in mute thankfulness. Mrs. Bell cried out triumphantly :

“ I knew it ! I was sure of it ! I was always certain that Honor would turn out to belong to us somehow or other.”

Whilst Katy, laughing, crying, and singing in a breath, skipped round the

room in an ecstasy, and finally flung herself into Mr. Langhton's arms.

Those most concerned, however, father and son, seemed spell-bound. Lady Cardonnel came to their relief.

"Tell us, Mr. Langhton, how came it that the tough, withered heart of this miser, the modern Midas, who turned all he touched into gold, was softened even by the matchless beauty of Lady Rossborough? Where did he meet with her? I have heard my own Irish godfather boast of her as turning every head in Dublin fifty years ago. But he always claimed her as a countrywoman; an Irish Browne."

"No, English," replied Stephen. "It is the one bit of poetry in a miser's life, inasmuch as true passion is always poetry. Looking over the securities left by Richard Strange, I found, just after the discovery of the prayer-book, a note

almost written over by accounts, which explained some of the facts of the story, and guided me to the locality. Lady Rosborough, then Elizabeth Brown, lived with her father, a half-pay lieutenant, in the pretty hamlet of Weston, on the Southampton Water, catching the breath of the salt sea, as your old sailor loves to do. Richard Strange, then about five-and-thirty, went there after a long illness for health and cheapness. He had already laid the foundation of his fortune; and offered settlements to his fair enslaver which might have tempted a richer maiden. She refused his hand, but that his heart remained with her this legacy sufficiently proves. And now, Honor, tell me, did I do well in applying a part of your money to pay off Sir Vivian? I never in my life saw a man so unwilling to receive a bundle of bank-bills. Was I wrong, I say?"

"Oh, Mr. Langhton!"

"Because, if I were, the estates can still be charged with the sum. It is not a bad investment."

"Oh, Mr. Langhton!" said Honor; "dear, dear friend, you are breaking my heart. Lord Delancy, it was only last night that you offered—that you wished—Even if Major Delancy should still resent what passed three years ago, you surely will not disdain to think of me as poor Lionel's sister; as one to whom this money can bring no pleasure, no comfort in the world, unless you will condescend to use it?"

"My daughter! my dear, dear daughter!" said Lord Delancy, folding her in his arms; "we cannot take the money without a far more precious gift."

"But he has not said he loves me," faintly whispered the heiress.

"Honora! my own Honora! my first and only love!" exclaimed Arthur. And

Lord Delancy, with a fervent blessing, placed her trembling hand within his son's ; nor even in that moment of ecstacy was Katy forgotten.

“Well,” said Mr. Langhton half-an-hour after, when the name of Honora Clive had been inserted in the blanks left in the settlement, and that important document, duly signed and witnessed, had been safely consigned to the keeping of the blue bag, “Well, it is some comfort to think that so excellent a specimen of engrossing will not be thrown away. I hate to see good sheep-skin wasted. And there was some danger here, I promise you ; for as Honor refused to marry Major Delancy when she was poor, and he hesitated at marrying her because she became rich, and Katy would have nothing to say to him at any rate, a marriage settlement seemed as sheer a superfluity as the money

which Sir Vivian brought down to pay the bell-ringers and treat the parish on taking possession of Atherton Hall. We'll ring the bells next week to another guess tune. And half a dozen years hence we'll have another bell-ringing and another wedding-day. Yes, my queen! you may make sure of that; for if nobody else will have you, I'll marry you myself. In the meanwhile you shall stay here at Atherton, according to your desire, with the dear mamma and the dear grandmamma; coddling all the old women in the village, nursing all the children, riding Britomarte, stuffing Flora, and spoiling everybody, especially Marigold and Jacob Stokes."

END OF VOL. I.

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